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King visits London embassy

LONDON (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein visited the Jordanian embassy in London Monday and met with Ambassador Fuad Ayoub and embassy staff. The King, who was accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh, discussed Middle East developments and Jordan's stand. He was briefed on the embassy's activities. The King passed directives concerning the embassy's work.

Malhas holds talks with Fathi Arafat

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health Abdul Rahim Malhas met Monday with Palestinian Red Crescent Society President Dr. Fathi Arafat and discussed with him cooperation between the ministry and the society. Dr. Arafat voiced interest in forming a joint committee to consult and coordinate issues related to health. Dr. Malhas expressed Jordan's readiness to cooperate with the society to establish a health system in order to raise the health standards of the Palestinian people. The meeting was attended by Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim.

Israelis are disappointed — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Nearly seven out of 10 Israelis are disappointed by the meagre results so far of the Palestinian autonomy agreement, according to an opinion poll published Monday. The Yedioth Aharanot newspaper survey found 67 per cent of Israeli Jews expected more, while 24 per cent were satisfied and nine per cent expected less. However, support for the accord remained steady at 48 per cent over the last month. Forty-six per cent of the Jewish population were against the Sept. 13 deal, six per cent expressed no opinion. The 48 per cent backing today was the same as when the last poll was released on Nov. 19. However, support has fallen since Sept. 15 when 61 per cent of Israeli Jews backed the agreement.

Hamas may take part in elections — official

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip (AFP) — One of the founders of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) said Monday Hamas could take part in legislative elections in the occupied territories. Ibrahim Al Yazuri told AFP here the organisation's participation would "depend on the aim" of the elections. "If the goal is to elect a parliament with the power to legislate, it is highly likely we will take part. If they are only aimed at electing an executive authority we will refuse to take part," Sheikh Yazuri said. While the jailed spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, has argued for participation in legislative elections, other Hamas officials outside the occupied territories have opposed his position.

Campbell steps down as party leader

OTTAWA (AP) — Kim Campbell, who served briefly as Canada's first woman prime minister earlier this year, stepped down Monday as leader of the progressive conservative Party. Her resignation cleared the way for Jean Charest to take over as the Conservative leader. "I am writing today to tender my resignation as national leader," Ms. Campbell said in a letter to Gerry St. Germain, Tory Party president.

Wife says Libyan ex-diplomat missing

CAIRO (AP) — A major Libyan dissident has disappeared from a Cairo hotel and may have been kidnapped by Libyan agents, a Libyan opposition group and his family said Monday. Mansur R. Kikhia, 62, Libya's foreign minister in the early 1970s and ambassador to the United Nations in the late 1980s, was last seen at his hotel Friday night, said Mr. Kikhia's Syrian-born American wife, Baha Omary Kikhia.

Rabin rules out deal on self-rule in 10 days

Arafat vows to weed out problems

Main snag said to be crossings control

Combined agency dispatches

PALESTINIAN leader Yasser Arafat vowed Tuesday to iron out the problems holding up the implementation of the Sept. 13 autonomy accord with Israel as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said the whole autonomy deal was likely to be delayed.

In an address to the European Parliament, Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), called for meticulous implementation of the autonomy accord.

"Any hesitation in implementing the accord would deprive it of its dynamism and credibility," Mr. Arafat said. "We are determined to work tirelessly to arrive at all the conditions necessary for meticulous, complete and honest implementation of the accord, and we expect the same from Israel."

Earlier, speaking in the Hague, Mr. Arafat said there was a "serious problem" over implementation of the accord, signed in Washington on Sept. 13.

"The credibility of the peace process will be damaged, no doubt," Mr. Arafat told a news conference, referring to his failure to reach agreement on the details of implementation at a meeting in Cairo on Sunday with Mr. Rabin.

The two leaders decided to hold further talks in the Egyptian capital in about 10 days' time, postponing the Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho which should have begun on Monday.

Asked to comment on Mr. Rabin's statement that Israel's crisis with the PLO was "grave," Mr. Arafat said:

"Definitely there is a serious problem. Otherwise, why the delay for 10 days?"

However, the PLO leader added: "Ten days is not long. Our people have lived in this tragedy for 45 years, under occupation."

"I hope that we will be able to clarify all the issues, remove all the obstacles, resolve the problems that we didn't settle during the last negotiations," Mr. Arafat said.

On Tuesday and Wednesday he is expected in London for his first official visit to Britain.

Mr. Rabin meanwhile warned that the whole autonomy deal is likely to be delayed and that he will not seal an implementation accord with Mr. Arafat in 10 days.

"He who believes that an agreement will be concluded in 10 days does not know what he is talking about," Mr. Rabin told Israeli political reporters. "In the next 10 days perhaps we will reach agreement on principles, but after that the details of the agreement will have to be drawn up," Mr. Rabin added.

"There are no sacred dates and I cannot give a commitment that the implementation of the agreement will be finished on April 13."

The expected military withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho was scheduled to start on Dec. 13 and be over by April 13, to allow elections to a Palestinian autonomy council on July 13.

Mr. Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben Ami explained that even if Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin overcame the major issues of control of the borders with Jordan and Egypt, the control of border crossings and the size of the autonomous area of Jericho, an agreement

would still not be signed.

"There are some more issues that still have to be negotiated," he told AFP. "The prime minister does not want to raise expectations."

Mr. Rabin said he had turned down a request from Mr. Arafat for joint Israeli-Palestinian border patrols.

Under the Sept. 13 deal, the two sides were to have reached within three months an interim accord detailing the transfer of power and a four-month troops withdrawal.

Mr. Rabin argued in an interview with military radio that implementation of autonomy depended on the situation in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

"It has to be clear to the Palestinians: Everything in the declaration of principles about which agreements have to be reached for implementation depend on the situation on the ground," he warned.

"If there is no agreement on these points the deadlines have no significance."

The disagreement with the PLO is over security because arms can come over the (border) lines," Mr. Rabin said in cabinet, according to Israel Radio. "And there is a question over symbols of sovereignty," he added.

Nonetheless, most ministers said they were "optimistic" that the obstacles would be overcome at the next Arafat-Rabin talks, the radio said.

Despite the fanfare that greeted the peace deal, Mr. Rabin said hardships were to be expected. He vowed not to compromise on Israeli "security."

"I said more than once there would be ups and downs, and

(Continued on page 5)

Yeltsin gets his constitution, but may lose parliament

MOSCOW (Agencies) — The ultra-nationalist party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was in first place in 24 out of Russia's 89 regions in elections for a new federal Russian parliament, official estimates said Monday.

Voters gave President Boris Yeltsin the strong presidential republic he wanted but seem to have rejected his reformist policies by voting heavily for communists, conservatives and extreme nationalists.

Officials predicted that results would show a contradictory vote in Sunday's elections — Russians narrowly passed Mr. Yeltsin's new constitution but shattered his dream of a like-minded parliament with which he could work.

With 37 of Russia's 89 districts reporting, the openly racist Liberal Democrats headed by Mr. Zhirinovskiy were leading with 23 per cent of the vote.

The main pro-Yeltsin group, Russia's Choice, was second with 15 per cent, the Communists had nearly 11 per cent, the anti-Yeltsin Agrarian Party

had 8.8 per cent and the populist Women of Russia bloc followed with 8.7 per cent.

Pro-Yeltsin groups were still hoping to pull ahead in Moscow and other big cities, where the counting of paper ballots from Sunday's election was slow. But the reformers' chances were fading.

Predicting his party would win, Mr. Zhirinovskiy called Monday for a ban on foreign aid, a major crackdown on crime and a halt to converting the Russian defence industry to civilian production.

He tried to play down his extremist image, saying he would cooperate with Mr. Yeltsin. "I am not a fascist," he told reporters.

Mr. Yeltsin vowed to use his new power to safeguard reform and his allies offered to close ranks with Communists in a plan to isolate the ultra-nationalists.

In a statement published by Itar-Tass news agency, Mr. Yeltsin said approval by voters of the new constitution which expands his powers was an

endorsement of his plans for stability and continued democratic and market reforms.

"Guided by your constitutional choice, I will do everything possible to guarantee the irreversibility of democratic processes and put up an effective constitutional barrier to all encroachments on the revision of your democratic choice," Mr. Yeltsin said.

First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, one of Mr. Yeltsin's staunchest backers, called for formation of a "large anti-fascist coalition" in the new parliament which could include communists if they elected to join.

"We need to create a large coalition which would be above the danger that threatens us," Mr. Gaidar said at a news conference.

He predicted that pro-reform blocks and communists opposed to Mr. Zhirinovskiy's hardline nationalists had a "very good chance" of keeping a strong hold on legislative power and perhaps forging a controlling majority if they joined together.

World leaders welcomed the adoption of a new Russian constitution, but expressed mounting concern over the apparent surge in support for rightwingers.

"We have not had the courage to pay the price needed to support reforms in Russia," said former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen in Copenhagen.

Praising the constitution vote, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Masayoshi Take-mura said in Tokyo: "We hope it will be the framework of political stability needed for Russia's democratisation and economic development."

In Bonn, German government spokesman Dieter Vogel told reporters: "The German

(Continued on page 5)



Palestinian demonstrators wave a Palestinian flag in front of an Israeli soldier and express their disappointment over the fact that Israeli troops are still in Jericho (AFP photo)

Missed pullout deadline deals severe blow to Jericho's hopes

By Mariam Shabin from Jericho

PESSIMISM appeared to creep into the hearts and minds of the Palestinian residents of Jericho as Monday's deadline for an Israeli military withdrawal was missed.

Sadness, listlessness and disappointment marked the day.

"It was to be expected," said Rajai Abdo, general manager of the Hisham Palace Hotel. "We still have hope, but people had great hopes for this day. Naturally the decision to delay any action is a disappointment."

"Nothing will happen, today, in 10 days or ever," said Ahmad, one very disappointed native of Jericho.

Pessimism was evident in the eyes of almost every Jerichoite. A general strike called for by the parties affiliated to the hardline Palestinian groups demonstrate their opposition to the Sept. 13 accord and another parallel strike called for by Fatah and FIDA, the acronym for the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine —

Abd Rabbo wing — to denounce the failure of Israel to abide by the withdrawal date was respected throughout Jericho.

The office of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was closed as well, "because Israel does not want to go," said a placard in English and Hebrew.

"People are upset," said Kamal Dweik, a senior member of the Jericho agricultural business community.

"Abu Khaled Al Amleh is expected to come to Jericho in a few days. Once he comes people will believe things will change," said Mr. Dweik, referring to the Amman-based PLO official who is expected to take charge of the Palestinian police force in Jericho.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin failed to meet the deadline and he was wrong to do so," said Mr. Dweik, who is believed to be a top contender for an agricultural ministerial post in a Palestinian government.

The failure of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Mr. Rabin to agree on the withdrawal during Sunday's Cairo meeting shot down hopes that the whole peace process was "really serious."

"Rabin could have made a thousand concessions or even made one step. But he chose not to," said Jamal Mashal, a businessman close to the rejectionist camp.

"If he was serious, he could have gone ahead with the release of prisoners, handed over a government hospital, but he chose to undermine the whole process, only strengthening our conviction that the so called peace process is one big hoax," said Mr. Mashal.

Indeed, people felt disheartened that not a single

thing changed in Jericho on Dec. 13.

Camera crews and print journalists filled the town square looking for a story to tell on what was to be a historic day.

Small crowds of youth chanted Fatah slogans and waved countless Palestinian flags. Groups of 30 to 50 people gathered in front of the FIDA offices with Abed Rabbo and Arafat posters chanting "Long live the old man."

But their voices, like their numbers, were weak. They are dependent on decisions that are not theirs to make," said Mr. Mashal.

"Today marks the day that 3,500 prisoners were supposed to be released, said Mr. Dweik. "By not releasing any, Israel gave us an indication that we will continue to fight for our rights. These are prisoners of war. When a peace treaty is signed, they should be the first to feel that peace has come."

For most people in Jericho the 10-day "delay" in Israeli withdrawal is seen as a second to last chance.

"In 10 days time, if this happens again then there will be trouble," predicted hotel manager Abdo. "To test the will of the people is one thing; they will be testing our faith and another delay will create a collapse of our faith in the peace process."

Israeli forces bombard South Lebanese villages

NABATIYEH, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli troops and guerrillas clashed in some of the heaviest fighting in South Lebanon in three months Monday and Israel moved up some of its biggest guns.

Security sources said five people were wounded, including an elderly Christian priest, in the clashes that erupted at dawn and spluttered over several hours later.

The fighting flared as Israel delayed its withdrawal from the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, which was scheduled to start Monday under the Sept. 13 peace accord with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The clashes in the flashpoint south began when guerrillas attacked a hill top outpost at Al Tobra in Israel's self-designated speaking on condition of anonymity.

No Israeli casualties were reported. But the Israelis north of Al Tobra, with more than 50 rounds of howitzer fire, setting several houses ablaze.

The security sources said the Israeli barrage was one of the harshest since the accord was signed.

They said a militiaman of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army was wounded when guerrillas detonated a roadside bomb in the eastern sector of the "security zone" as an SLA armoured personnel carrier passed.

The Iranian-backed Hizbol-

lah claimed it carried out the two attacks. A communiqué claimed the guerrillas demolished the Al Tobra position, set a Merkava tank on fire and destroyed an SLA armoured vehicle.

The 45-minute bombardment of Nabatiyeh tapered off at 7:30 a.m. (0530 GMT), the sources said.

They identified the wounded priest as the Rev. George Nasr, 84, head of the Maronite Catholic monastery of Saint Antony in Nabatiyeh.

Father Nasr was preparing for morning service at a girl's school in the monastery when a shell exploded near him. He was hit by shrapnel in both legs.

The other victims were two women, Samiah Badreddin, 41, and her 17-year-old daughter Zainab, and their Sri Lankan maid, whose name was not available.

All three suffered minor shrapnel wounds when a shell hit their house.

Nabatiyeh is the biggest town facing the central sector of the Israeli-occupied zone. Its population of 60,000 is overwhelmingly Shiite, but there are small Maronite and Eastern Orthodox communities.

Schools closed for the day as municipal officials toured the town in loudspeaker vans, urging people to stay indoors.

South Lebanon, to help civil defence volunteers put out at least six house fires in Nabatiyeh.

Israeli shells also hit the nearby villages of Kfar Rumman, eastern Zawar and western Zawar, the sources reported.

Hizbollah positions in the highlands of Iqlim Al Tufah, fired two salvos of Katyusha rockets into the "security zone" at mid-morning, the sources said.

Three projectiles exploded in marjayoun, provincial capital of the Israeli-held enclave, and four in neighbouring Qleiaa. They caused no casualties or damage, the sources added.

Schools were closed and students were hurriedly bussed home after the Katyusha blasts. Thousands of residents scurried into basements or bomb shelters, the sources said.

They said the Israelis later brought in two 203-mm guns and two 175-mm howitzers, but there were no reports that the heavy guns were fired.

It was the first time Israeli has deployed 203-mm artillery in the south since it invaded Lebanon in 1982 to drive out the PLO from what was then its main power base, the sources said.

They said the four big guns were positioned at the Israeli army's Kham base in the central sector of the "security zone."

Israeli soldiers kill 3 in Gaza

GAZA CITY, Occupied Strip (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers shot dead two Palestinians and a "suicide bomber" and wounded a dozen youths as violence erupted on the Gaza Strip on Monday.

Troops opened fire killing a Palestinian "suicide bomber" as he drove a stolen ambulance towards an army jeep, military officials said.

A soldier was lightly hurt in the resulting blast near the Nahal Oz crossing point into the central sector of the Gaza Strip.

The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility in a leaflet which reiterated the call to liberate all of Palestine.

A 23-year-old, Kassaf Al-Sindi, a wanted member of the Islamic Jihad, died during a shootout which left two of his accomplices wounded in Rafah, on the border with Egypt, Palestinian sources said.

Undercover soldiers also shot dead Mohammad Moammar, a wanted activist with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Rafah.

Trouble erupted in Jabaliya refugee camp on the edge of Gaza City and soldiers opened fire wounding seven youths. Another two Palestinians were wounded during stone-throwing in Rafah.

An unprecedented number of troops have been deployed to prevent attacks to coincide with the Dec. 13 deadline for Israel to start withdrawing forces from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreed Sunday night to postpone the deadline for about 10 days to try to reach an overall accord to implement autonomy under the Sept. 13 deal.

Palestinians were angry but not surprised Monday when Israel failed to start withdrawing its troops on schedule.

"The people are very disappointed and depressed," said Sufian Abu Zaydah, an official of PLO leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction in charge of liaison with the Israeli army.

Mr. Abu Zaydah said the failure of Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to agree on implementing self-rule, during last-minute talks in Cairo Sunday, would also hold up the release of Palestinian prisoners.

"We did feel that Israel would not meet its commitments," said 18-year-old student Mohammad Abdul Kader in Jabaliya from where the army was to have begun pulling out of Monday.

"This delay may put an end to our hopes, but it's just as well because the intifada will restart," he said.

Khaled Hindi, a supporter of Hamas, warned that anger would spill over into more violence, which had already spiralled ahead of the Dec. 13 deadline.

"There is a clear imbalance between the two sides," he said. "Israel is the strongest and can impose any date it wants" to start the withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Haidar Abdul Shafi, a key political figure in Gaza, criticised Mr. Arafat and said the delay would serve as ammunition for the opponents of autonomy.

"I expected this to happen. But I was surprised by Arafat saying the 13th is a 'sacred' date. He made a mistake and had to come back. I hope Arafat will not make any new compromises," he said.

Dr. Abdul Shafi, who has served as the chief Palestinian negotiator at bilateral peace talks in Washington, warned "if there is no agreement in 10 days, nothing will remain of the declaration of principles" on self-rule.

"The 10 days that they

(Continued on page 5)



The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (left) explains his policy in the elections as the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennady Zyuganov (background, centre) looks on, during a election party held in the Kremlin in the early hours of Tuesday (AFP photo)

Angry Jericho shuts down over delay in withdrawal

JERICHO, occupied West Bank (R) — Palestinians in Jericho shut down their businesses Monday in protest at Israel's failure to start pulling out troops from the West Bank town under the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace deal.

"This is a strike to show that we are against the delay in the agreement," said Adnan Hamad, a leader of the leftist Fida party which supports the accord. He said people were "very, very angry."

Monday was the day troops were to begin withdrawing from Jericho and the occupied Gaza Strip under the peace accord signed in Washington in September. But on Sunday Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat put off the start for at least 10 days while negotiations continue.

The PLO office in the heart of Jericho was shuttered. Scrawled across the door were the words: "In protest against the lack of Israeli credibility in implementing the agreement."

About 50 Palestinians marched through town, shouting defiant slogans but avoiding confrontation with Israeli police. "We are not terrorists, the terrorist is Rabin," they shouted.

Since the Sept. 13 peace accord Jericho — as the future seat of Palestinian interim self-government — has ignored strike calls ordered by activists directing the six-year-old revolt against Israeli rule.

Elsewhere in the occupied West Bank, Palestinians observed a general strike on Monday called by Islamic fundamentalist opponents of the peace deal. The opponents include the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups.

Israel and the PLO have so far failed to agree on who will control West Bank and Gaza crossing points with Jordan and Egypt, and on the size of the Jericho area to be evacuated by Israel.

PLO official Abdul Karim Sider accused Israel on Monday of failing to honour its commitment under the accord and warned the delay was boosting the opposition.

"The opposition are going to get a big push from this delay. The people in the streets do not trust the Israelis," Mr. Sider said.

Jericho turned out in full last September to celebrate the signing of the Israel-PLO peace accord. The city is a stronghold for Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement but there has been growing frustration over the lack of changes on the ground since the historic signing.

Young Palestinians predicted failure to implement the accord would revive the revolt in the city.

"Peace is forbidden. How many people have been killed. Come down here again and you will find Hamas with a strong presence," said 13-year-old Najd.

Israelis and Palestinians had feared any delay in meeting the deadlines imposed by their peace deal would boost a drive by militant opponents on both sides to torpedo the accord. Since the peace deal became public 39 Palestinians and 18 Israelis have been killed.



'SUICIDE AMBULANCE': An Israeli soldier gestures next to a wrecked ambulance used against an Israeli patrol in Gaza City on Monday. The attack left the driver dead and an Israeli soldier wounded (AFP photo)

At least one Gaza settlement is eager for immediate transfer

DUGIT, occupied Gaza Strip (AP) — Jewish settlers in this fishing village sent 35 of Dugit's 40 children to relatives in Israel on Sunday. Women will leave next.

The pullout had been timed to begin when Israel's army started its withdrawal from Gaza on Monday.

Tova Goren said residents feared that the delay announced in Cairo for implementing Palestinian self-rule would only make matters worse and ignite violence in the Gaza Strip.

"The Arabs might not accept it well. They might still attack us. Nothing has changed for me," she said.

Orli Kaliti said she will leave Tuesday unless the government took action, either to provide heavy security or move the settlement, inside Israel's pre-1967 borders.

"I don't feel safe," she said. Ms. Kaliti bore the Arabs no bitterness.

"This is not our land," she said. "For the peace, get us out of here. Put us somewhere else."

Unlike many of the settlers in the Gaza Strip, the residents of Dugit feel no attachment to their sandy hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

"We are not land of Israel types," Ms. Kaliti said, referring to the ideological settlers who maintain their right to settle throughout the occupied lands is based on God's Biblical "promise of the land of Israel to the Jews."

That commitment is one of the stumbling blocks facing the first stage of Palestinian autonomy that was to begin in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Many of the 120,000 Israeli settlers, including the 3,500 in the Gaza Strip, have vowed to stay.

But Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials say the continued presence of the settlements pose a threat to Palestinian sovereignty, especially isolated ones like Dugit that are difficult for the army to protect without keeping troops in heavily populated Palestinian areas.

Dugit is comprised of 18 families, about 80 people, who applied to the government 10 years ago to allot them land along the Israeli coast for a fishing village.

"We were interested in setting up a fishing village anywhere in our country," Ms. Kaliti recalled, looking over the caravans and fishing boats dotting its landscape. "We are made up of families who know only fishing."

Seven years later the offer came: The right-wing Likud Party government, committed to Jewish settlement throughout the occupied territories, offered the fishermen and their families this isolated spot in the northern Gaza Strip.

The Dugit "seed group" of initial settlers was caught off guard, Ms. Kaliti said. They had expected an offer of land within Israel. It was the height of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule, and Gaza was plagued with daily violence.

"Out of 350 families who were signed on," Ms. Kaliti said bitterly, "three turned up." Later, 15 more families followed.

As attacks by opponents to the peace talks from extremists on both sides increased in recent

cent week, so did the determination by the Dugit settlers to leave.

"On Friday, some men piled out of a Peugeot at the gate brandishing knives," Ms. Kaliti said. "A soldier opened fire and they got back in and sped off. Ninety minutes later, two masked men turned up at the fence. Again, soldiers chased them off."

The events prompted the settlers to send their children into Israel. They are holding out, not for continued settlement, but for an alternative site, outside the Gaza Strip.

"We don't want compensation," Dugit settler Yoram Ravitzky told Israel Television in an appeal to the government for relocation outside the occupied lands. "We want people to talk to us."

Dugit settlers lived in caravans, Mr. Ravitzky said, and moving them to another site would not be a problem. "All we want is another site on the coast."

"Dugit was supposed to be a fishing village," Ms. Kaliti sighed. "But the army restricted our fishing to avoid confrontation with the Arabs, so we all hold jobs on the outside, as well."

Ms. Kaliti's neighbour Batya Booda watched over the five remaining children in Dugit — kids whose relatives were unable to take them in. A guard dog lay nearby.

"The women leave tomorrow," she said. Tova and Eyal Goren were among the last to move their children out on Monday. Their two small, blonde daughters were playing in the back seat.

"What would you do?" Mr. Goren said as he drove out.

Jabaliya residents may not like self-rule but want Israelis to quit

JABALIYA REFUGEE CAMP, occupied Gaza Strip (AP) — Life around the only Israeli military outpost in the heart of one of Gaza's dusty shantytowns feels like a war zone.

Khalil Arbeed has the scars to prove it.

On the afternoon of Jan. 17, 1993, Mr. Arbeed was standing in the doorway of his medical laboratory when a rubber bullet meant for youths throwing stones struck him in the head.

"This area has been the worst battlefield in Jabaliya," said the 27-year-old pulling back his hairline to show his scar. "I hope that very soon our neighbour will withdraw and we will have some peace."

Israel had been expected to start pulling its soldiers out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho on Monday, under an autonomy accord signed in September.

But Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat failed Sunday to resolve disputes over the planned withdrawal, delaying the move. They said they would talk again in 10 days and the delay would not endanger the Israel-PLO accord.

For the 65,000 Palestinians in the largest refugee camp in

the Gaza Strip, this meant perpetuation of a military camp in their midst that is a potent symbol of everything they hate about the occupation.

Hidden behind a veil of barbed wire and high fences, the outpost divides the camp in two. A 50-metre tower rising to one side gives soldiers a bird's eye view of everything that moves in the camp.

For the refugees, it is a daily reminder that they have no freedom.

Palestinian youths pelt it almost daily with stones, provoking Israeli rubber or live bullets in return.

Mr. Arbeed's two-room laboratory and neighbouring groceries, pharmacies and boutiques lie in the no-man's-land that marks the boundary between the Israeli troops and the stone-throwers.

They have been caught in the cross fire since the beginning of the intifada, that started in December 1987. The walls of the run-down houses around the post have been pierced by bullets and dented by stones.

The Israelis have propped a ladder against the wall of the two-story building of Mr. Arbeed's neighbours, Sabreen and Sharifa Shrafah.

The two women run the family pharmacy. They can

practically touch the barbed wire from the front door.

Sharifa, 21, a pharmacist, said people are scared of shopping there because of its proximity to the military outpost. The soldiers have harassed young men who shopped there, asking for their identity cards and shouting profanities at them.

The Shrafah sisters, who tried to live in an apartment over the pharmacy for two years, moved a month ago along with their mother, brother and two other sisters into their grandfather's house half a kilometre away.

"The Israelis use the ladder to get to the roof, which they have turned into an observation post from which they have shot at other refugees," said Sabreen, 19, pointing at a soldier manning the lookout.

The family, followers of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, opposes the agreement saying it gives little land and power to the Palestinians. But they still cannot quite wait for the moment the army pulls out.

"These people haven't been very neighbourly," said the girl's mother, Fehmiyya, 45. "Even though we're against the peace agreement, we will have a feast the day they leave."

Turkish Cypriots elect coalition

NICOSIA (AFP) — The ruling party in northern Cyprus since the Turkish-Cypriots set up a breakaway republic 10 years ago has lost its monopoly on power, election results showed Monday.

The make-up of a coalition was set to determine the fate of U.N. efforts to build a federation between the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots after almost two decades of division.

Veteran Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş himself engineered the fall of his centre-right National Union Party (NUP) by backing a newly-formed Democratic Party (DP) because of a dispute with his Prime Minister Dervish Eroglu.

The NUP won 29.85 per cent of the vote in Sunday's parliamentary elections, or 17 out of 50 seats, while the DP ran a close second with 29.19 per

cent and 15 seats, according to the final results.

Political analysts said the outcome — with the DP splitting the right-wing vote — was a defeat for the NUP, which at the last election in 1990 clinched 54.60 per cent of the vote, with Mr. Denktaş's support.

The centre-left Turkish Republican Party (TRP) of Ozker Ozgur, an advocate of territorial compromise with the Greek-Cypriots, won 13 seats with 24.16 per cent of Sunday's polling.

Another leftist group, the Communal Liberation Party of Mustafa Akinci, won 13.6 per cent and five seats.

Mr. Denktaş and Mr. Eroglu have been at odds over a U.N. confidence-building plan to reopen Nicosia airport and the Turkish-occupied town of Famagusta, with Mr. Eroglu charging that fellow hardliner

Denktash was ready to make concessions.

On the other side of the U.N. patrolled "green line" separating the two communities, the Greek-Cypriots have accused both Mr. Denktaş and Mr. Eroglu of intransigence and said their dispute served only to hold up U.N. peace moves.

The election was brought forward under pressure from Mr. Denktaş and the opposition, which has boycotted parliament since 1990.

U.N. mediators have said the polls would determine the outcome of negotiations to build a federation that have been stalled since July when Mr. Denktaş stepped down as his side's negotiator.

Apart from falling out with Mr. Denktaş, the NUP also lost voters because of political scandals and a weak economy.

Crisis of identity besets Palestinian police force at birth

By Barry Parker
Reuter

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip — The Palestinian police force is suffering from an image problem, if not an identity crisis, in the uncertain hours before autonomy is implemented in the occupied territories.

While Israelis are asking who the new policemen are and what powers they will have, and even threatening to shoot them on sight, the Palestinians want to know when and what are they taking over, and who will control them.

Where are the guns, where are the uniforms and even, when are they coming?

The man who should be able to answer at least some of the questions is keeping silent, partly because he does not know and partly because

he is awaiting orders from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Tunis.

Brigadier-General Ziad Aref has spent much of the three weeks since he arrived in Gaza to prepare the new force calming the fears of rival Palestinian factions that the police will be a political tool for repression.

Many recruits are undergoing training in Egypt and Jordan, and the rest is coming from Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) units scattered across the Arab World.

"Our police will ensure human rights and act in a democratic fashion," Gen. Aref assured AFP in the only interview he has granted so far.

Opponents of the PLO's Sept. 13 autonomy deal are little inclined to believe him. "There are many signs already that the future

Palestinian authority will not work to strengthen democracy," said Ghazi Abu Jayab, Gaza head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

"The Palestinian police that Arafat is setting up is nothing more than militia for his own Fatah group," he said.

Khaled Hindi, recently released from an Israeli jail for membership of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, voiced "fear for the way the police will treat the Islamic tendency."

And Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi is founding a body to monitor human rights under the Palestinian authority.

However, the uncertainty did not prevent thousands of Palestinians from trying to join the force which Israel

says could have as many as 15,000 light-armed officers.

Gen. Aref is counting on Palestinian pride at seeing their own people in uniform in Gaza and Jericho for the first time to help overcome many of the teething problems.

Up to 6,000 police will be deployed in a first stage, the brigadier said.

Some 500 Gazans who served in the Israeli police or trained before the uprising began in December 1987 are ready to go into police stations next week.

Maintaining order will be in the hands of a national police, a security service and local police.

Palestinian sources say the Israeli army will handover a police station, a prison holding 250 Palestinians and a military court at Gaza's seaf-

ront Hof base, the biggest in the city.

The Palestinians can move in, but cannot carry weapons until Israel and the PLO reach an interim agreement on the implementation of their autonomy deal.

While Palestinians are worried about the new force, many Israelis are apoplectic about it.

Nearly one in every five of the 120,000 settlers is prepared to use a gun to resist arrest by the Palestinian police, according to an opinion poll, and one far-right deputy has threatened to shoot them on sight.

The settlers have launched a nationwide petition under the banner "Don't give guns to killers."

Mr. Rabin riposted: "I am not giving anyone guns; they will have to buy them for themselves."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

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Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Le Monde Sans Limites
18:30 Best of the Week
19:00 News in French
19:15 Varieties
19:30 News in Arabic
20:00 Night Court
21:00 Brand New Life
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "A Yank At Oxford"

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fajr
06:20 Sunrise
11:30 Dhuhr
14:14 Asr
16:30 Maghreb
18:00 Isha

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German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 694195

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 629922

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675591

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be cloudy and rainy, temperatures will drop, and winds will be westerly active. In Amman, it will be partly cloudy to cloudy accompanied with showers, winds will be southerly active and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.

AMMAN

Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197

Dr. Mubashir Marashli 820425

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 831039

Dr. Nidal Al Mahdani 815772

Ferdous pharmacy 778536

Al Asena pharmacy 674053

Najoud pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yasoub pharmacy 644945

Shaqani pharmacy 674668

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Najoud pharmacy 623672

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Najoud pharmacy 623672

Najoud pharmacy 623672

ZARQA:

Dr. Mubashir Hijawi 981217

Khalil pharmacy 985417

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 16, Amman 23, Humidity readings: Amman 55 per cent, Amman 34 per cent.

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Dr. Mubashir Marashli 820425

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 831039

Dr. Nidal Al Mahdani 815772

Ferdous pharmacy 778536

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Jordan Electricity Authority 815613

Electric Power Company 626361

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EMERGENCIES

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Civil Defence Department 661111

Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Fire Brigade 192, 621111, 637777

Police 192, 621111, 637777

Police 192, 621111, 637777

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Missing boy returns home on his own

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ra'ed Hourani, the 14-year-old boy who was reported missing since Nov. 22, returned home last Thursday on his own to the great relief of his family.

Ra'ed told his family that he went to Irbid to earn money to repay a bill of credit he had signed with his school teacher.

Mouhadin Hourani, Ra'ed's father, a merchant who lives in Jabal Al Hashemi Al Shammali, said his son left his house after a family argument and did not return. The family notified all police stations and hospitals in Amman and also placed an advertisement in local newspaper with a photo of the boy in efforts to locate the boy.

While Ra'ed was still missing, Mr. Hourani told the Jordan Times that he suspected that his son's school, Kuteibah Ibn Muslim, and one of its teachers were responsible for Ra'ed's disappearance.

"One of the school teachers knew I was a trader and convinced my son to sign a bill of credit worth JD 70, and in return, my son would buy and sell merchandise for the teacher," the father said. When Ra'ed returned home last week he told his family he took some merchandise from his teacher and was selling it on the streets when he was picked up by police who seized the mer-

chandise.

The boy explained that he became frightened and his only alternative was to go to Irbid to work with construction labourers in order to earn enough money to pay his debt to his teacher, according to Mr. Hourani.

"My son was doing hard labour, and he slept in the workshop in Irbid, and when he returned home he was in a miserable situation and had no money with him," the father said.

Following Ra'ed's return, the teacher, who's name Mr. Hourani withheld, tried to settle the problem in a triable fashion, said Ra'ed's father, but a settlement has not been satisfactorily reached, he added.

The father told the Jordan Times that the family was relieved by their son's return, adding that he will take no legal action against the teacher unless the police proceed with the case.

"Thank God my son is back," the father said. "I took him to school the next day, and he is doing well there."

Accident kills 3 people

Three people including a four-month-old child were killed and 12 people were injured in a road accident on the Ain Al Hilleh-Birein-Jerash Road, Sunday, according to police.

Dead are Mustafa Bani

Ghanim (41), Ali Hassan (40) and Abdullah Mashahbeh (four-months).

A police official told the Jordan Times that the accident, which took place at 9:30 a.m., resulted from the explosion of one of the tyres of a truck bearing Jordanian tags causing it to lose its balance and collide with a car with Saudi Arabia tags and a bus operating along the Ajloun-Amman Road.

The casualties were taken to Zarqa and Jerash hospitals for treatment, police reports said.

A Zarqa hospital official told the Jordan Times the hospital received two victims, the child who died upon arrival at hospital, and the mother of the child, who was undergoing surgery for head injuries she sustained.

Meanwhile, Jerash hospital officials contacted by the Jordan Times said the hospital is treating one man for an arm injury and the last two victims were released from the hospital Monday morning.

Search continues for body

Civil Defence officers continuing their search for the body of a four-year-old girl who was trapped along with her two sisters in her family's car when it slid into Wadi Al Arab Dam, Friday. The bodies on Sanaa (8) and Baraa (6) Lababneh were pulled from the dam, but authorities were unable to

find Anfal, the youngest daughter of Hassan Lababneh of Jofa in Irbid.

The children were left alone in the car, while their parents went for a walk according to Captain Abdul Raouf Maaitah, director of public relations at the Civil Defence Department.

The car slid into the dam when its hand-brake was released, probably by one of the girls, Capt. Maaitah said, adding that the car was parked at the edge of the dam.

He told the Jordan Times negligence resulted in the death of the three children. Capt. Maaitah pointed out that a fence was erected at the southeast side of the dam, where the car was parked, it would have prevented the car from sliding into the dam.

He said the darkness and thickness of the dam's waters are hindering search efforts by Civil Defence officers to locate Anfal, adding that the department will continue its search until her body is found.

Meanwhile, according to Jordan News Agency, Petra, report, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday expressed deep sympathy over the death of the three young girls and instructed the authorities to step up the search for the body of the toddler. Prince Hassan urged citizens and officials to take extra precautions to prevent the recurrence of such a tragic incident.

UNRWA staff groups suspend 36-hour sit-in at agency offices

Meeting to prepare demands agenda scheduled

By Suhair Obaidat
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Staff committees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) Monday evening suspended their 36-hour sit-in at UNRWA headquarters upon meeting with Minister of State Adel Isheid, who is also director of the Palestinian Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry.

The sit-in was announced Sunday after negotiations with UNRWA Deputy Director George Carren failed to reach a compromise on demands for salary increases, improvement of conditions of health and education benefits as well as a reconsideration of the pension and annual leave schemes.

The staff committee members are scheduled to meet with Mr. Isheid next Monday to prepare a joint working agenda to pursue the agency's staff demands, which Mr. Isheid conveyed to Mr. Carren and UNRWA Commissioner General in Vienna Ilse Turkman.

Mr. Isheid voiced the

Jordanian government's total support for the organisation's workers' "just and legitimate demands," which have been outstanding for over a year.

Defying cold weather and evening rain, 32 committee members, mostly middle-aged men, were not allowed to stage the sit-in inside the agency's headquarters and were denied permission to use the building's facilities.

Representing about 7,000 agency employees, the staff committee comprise general services, teachers, labourers and the Amman branch executive committee.

Odeh Rahal, the committee's spokesperson, said that UNRWA workers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have staged sit-ins since the beginning of the month and are planning a strike as of today (Tuesday).

"We have also contacted the UNRWA staff in Lebanon, and they are going to take similar action soon," Mr. Rahal told the Jordan Times. The employees claim that a survey conducted by UNRWA on government institutions in

Amman did not come up with equitable results, because "the survey gave positive indication of our counterparts in the civil service, but the survey did not take into consideration the benefits enjoyed by government employees," according to Hussein Hreithan, head of the teachers executive committee.

The staff are objecting to agency job cuts "on the pretext of financial strains," said Mr. Rahal.

A conference of donor countries in New York last Friday, attended by representatives of 38 countries, the European Community and the Holy See, pledged financial and in-kind contributions to the UNRWA worth \$127 million.

The staff are demanding a lowering of the retirement age to 50 from 60 and the active service period to 25 instead of 30 years.

"In developing countries, the end of service compensations upon resignation are at a percentage of one month to each year, but in the case of UNRWA, tens of employees died before completing 30 years of service and they were

unable to collect their compensations," said Mr. Hreithan.

Patients coming to the agency's clinics are treated at a ratio of 100-120 patients to one doctor, said Mr. Hreithan. "This contradicts the mission of the agency, which claims it is a humanitarian one," he said.

Mr. Hreithan and others present at the sit-in voiced their opposition to the agency's decision to stop issuing food rations and stationery, limiting them to what it describes as "emergency cases." According to Mr. Hreithan, a majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan are below the poverty line.

Overcrowded classrooms with 52-55 students each and minimal administration staff "negatively affect children's learning, and this is a violation of children's rights," said Mr. Hreithan.

Some Lower House deputies visited the UNRWA headquarters Monday and voiced their support for the workers' demands. They included Khalil Haddadin, Bassam Enmush, Abdul Aziz Jaber and Abdul Munem Abu Zant.

Officials retrieve ancient coins unearthed at municipal work site

AMMAN (J.T.) — A cache of 215 silver coins dating back to the Hellenistic era between 300 and 200 B.C. were unearthed at Iraq Al Amir town, west of Wadi Seer. The ancient monies will be publicly displayed shortly at the Archaeological Museum of Jordan, according to an announcement Monday by Department of Antiquities Director General Safwan Tell.

Dr. Tell told the Jordan Times that the coins were accidentally discovered while workers bulldozed the area for the installation of a new sewage system.

When the antiquities department was informed of the find, it sent a 15-member team which worked from Friday through Sunday to sift the earth and collect all the coins, said Dr. Tell.

The coins were hidden inside a jar which was accidentally

smashed by the bulldozer, and were scattered about, Dr. Tell explained.

As the site contained no archaeological finds, the department believes that the coins were hidden by people living in the area at the time. On the coins appear the picture of the kings of the Ptolemaic era and their queens, along with clearly visible Greek writings on both faces of the coins, which, Dr. Tell maintained, confirms the Hellenistic rule in the area during the second and third centuries B.C., following the period of Alexander the Great in Egypt and Syria.

Minister of Tourism Mohammad Adwan, who was immediately informed of the cache, expressed delight at the discovery and voiced appreciation of the efforts of the Public Security Department (PSD) for facilitating the work of the Department of Antiquities and the local citizens who provided



The cache of silver coins from the Hellenistic era, which was unearthed in Iraq Al Amir

other assistance. Dr. Adwan and Dr. Tell called on the public to report to the department any archaeological finds, which, they said throw light on the history of the country and enrich its historical treasures.

Bulletin reports continued Israeli measures against Palestinians in occupied territories

AMMAN (Petra) — Israeli acts of repression against the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued during November, despite the signing of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)-Israel accord in Washington on Sept. 13, according to a monthly bulletin issued by the Foreign Ministry Department of Palestinian Affairs Monday.

The statement said that last

month Israeli courts passed prison sentences ranging from several months to several years on 95 Palestinians and escalated human rights violations of the Palestinian population.

The number of Palestinians killed during November was 18, raising to 1,546 the total number of Palestinians killed since the start of the intifada in 1987, noted the bulletin. Israeli authorities de-

molished 28 Arab homes under the pretext that they were built without licences, and schools and universities were stormed or closed by the Israeli forces under different excuses, continued the statement.

According to the bulletin, Israeli police detained 100 children, and 800 Palestinians continue to be held without trial. The bulletin attributed the November waves of violence

primarily to Jewish settlers in the occupied lands who discriminately rampaged through Arab towns, shooting Palestinians and damaging Arab property.

According to the bulletin, the confiscation of Arab-owned lands continued last month and the number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank reached 186, and those in the Gaza Strip numbered 20 to date.

U.S. congress team arrives

AMMAN (J.T.) — A U.S. congressional delegation headed by Senator Dennis DeConcini arrived in Jordan Monday as part of a fact-finding tour of several countries in the region. The delegation includes:

Senator DeConcini (Democrat, Arizona) who is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senator, Bob Graham (Democrat, Florida), a member of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

Senator Arlen Specter (Republican, Pennsylvania) also on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senator Charles E. Grassley (Republican, Iowa), on the Senate Budget Committee and the Finance Committee.

Congressman William Richardson (Democrat, New Mexico), Energy and Commerce Committee in the House.

During their stay in Amman, the members of the delegation will meet with senior government officials.

6.6% of households live below poverty line — statistical report

AMMAN (Petra) — By the end of 1992, the number of needy families living below the poverty line in Jordan rose to 6.6 per cent of the total number of households, up from 1.5 per cent in 1987, according to a statistical bulletin released by a government-appointed task force.

The bulletin, released Monday, said the number of families living in absolute poverty was 21.3 per cent of the total number of households in Jordan, up from 18.7 per cent in 1987.

Commenting on the outcome of the survey, Hussein

Al Khatib of the Ministry of Planning Department of Research and Studies said that unemployment is largely blamed for the state of poverty, and any moves to curtail unemployment would positively affect the status of the poor.

Dr. Khatib said the department was striving to help the government achieve a balance between human and economic resources by creating jobs and initiating income-generating projects.

The government's five-year-plan, which continues through 1997, he said, is

largely aimed at dealing with unemployment and poverty

The development plan entails an ambitious programme to reduce to 9.6 per cent the rate of unemployment by the end of 1997, added Dr. Khatib.

The plan, which envisages the creation of 224,000 jobs, provide for measures to cater to the needs of families living below and around the poverty line, including government subsidies, soft loans for initiating projects and vocational training for heads of household, said Dr. Khatib.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artists Khaled Hijazi, Mohammad Al Ameri, and Adnan Al Shari at Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Hani Al Hourani entitled "Impressions from Wadi Al Waleh" at Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Iraqi artist Salam Jamil at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Samia Zarou at the Open Studio "Al Marsam Al Maftuh," Jabal Amman, 2nd Circle (9:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00 all days except Fridays).
- ★ Exhibition of handicrafts at the Marriott Hotel.
- ★ Photographic exhibition by artist Basheir Al-Hajeh at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition on the intifada and Jerusalem at the Professional Association Complex.
- ★ Two exhibitions of paintings by Edelbert De La Portilla and Pitr Pawluczok at the Royal Cultural Centre.

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The job of creating jobs

FOR ALL technical purposes we now have what the government describes as the first deficit-free budget. There are arguments and counter-arguments why it is not so since foreign assistance and fresh loans to service the already high debt burden are not considered as deficit.

It may be a useful exercise to go into that part of the budget since it is pretty clear whatever arguments are used and heard, the net picture remains unchanged — that Jordan cannot hope to manage on its own while straining under one of the higher per capita foreign debts.

But what is indeed of high concern is the unemployment figures that are continued to be cited by officials. Finance Minister Sami Gammoh explained to the Lower House of Parliament Sunday that the work force was expected to reach nearly one million during the year 1994 and only 875,000 of them would be employed — meaning an unemployment of 13 per cent.

However, the 13 per cent figure does not reflect the actual unemployment rate in the country if only because of the parameters that are applied to determine the official statistics.

Well, the numbers on paper, whether the government's or others', do not matter much anyway. What matters indeed is the situation on the ground, and that does not look very healthy and encouraging.

We are seeing an increasing line of youths turning up at the doors of commercial enterprises seeking jobs; graduates are pushed into applying for jobs that perhaps need only Tawjihi. On the one hand, it is a healthy trend because there has to be structural change in the attitude of our youth. By and large, most Jordanians frown upon menial jobs and would rather sit idle than accepting a position which is considered undignified in society. As such, highly qualified people coming down to earth from their dreams of jobs with "status" and considering any post as a stepping stone is a welcome sign that the structural changes may be round the corner sometime in the future.

We have seen every one of our budget talking about reducing unemployment, but not in specifics, except of course the number of jobs created in the civil service. We have heard of the Development and Employment Fund, but do we really know how much money was actually spent on creating one job through that fund? Do we know for sure whether the amount spent on creating one position through support from the fund was not a case of spending a dinar for one-tenth of its worth?

What we would definitely like to know is whether there is any change in the government agencies' bureaucratic policies to encourage entrepreneurship and how many offices and discouraging awkward and cumbersome procedures one has to go through before being told whether he or she qualifies for a loan as start-up capital.

All said and done, we are sure that many of our honourable deputies whose portfolios include demands for jobs for their constituents would definitely be asking these questions in the House during the debate on the 1994 budget.

But satisfactory answers from the floor are not simply enough. Things have to move, and move fast, before our youth are pushed further into despair and frustration to a level that would eventually threaten our social security and stability.

No doubt it is not the sole responsibility of the government to create jobs; the private sector has to assume a key role, but then the private sector should have enough incentives to go out of its way to embark on an uncertain journey of creating more jobs leading to reduced profits.

There has to be stronger interaction between the government and private sector with the clear understanding that everyone's interest is at stake here and something has to be done collectively. Dialogue and free exchange of views are the key to that, and we hope the government would move in a direction that removes clouds if any in the air hampering such a dialogue.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al-Dustour daily commented on the announcement of the 1994 fiscal budget, noting that it aimed at dealing with most of the imbalances at the domestic and external levels. The budget also provides for incentives to stimulate the private sector, improve the investment climate and deal with the difficulties facing some of the Jordanian public firms, noted the daily. There are provisions in the budget to ensure sustainable development, boost vocational training and promote other basic services, continued the paper. It said that the budget statement which showed that the unemployment rate has now dropped to 13 per cent of the Jordanian workforce provided also for measures to ensure at least a six per cent growth rate of gross domestic product for 1993 and later on.

A columnist in Al-Rai daily said Monday that Arab countries' efforts to ensure Western and American commitments to find durable and comprehensive solutions for the Middle East conflict are futile and would end nowhere. The Arabs have lost everything with the destruction of the Iraqi economy and military power as well as their moral potential and their ability to fuse renewed collective Arab action which is the required mechanism for uniting Arab states, said Bader Abdul Haq. Indeed, the Arab states are now at their weakest point notably because they are not in a position to demand that the international legality by implemented or the requirements of durable peace met, noted the writer. Noting that the Western countries realise that Israel remains the main obstacle for the attainment of peace, the writer said that what the Arab states receive from Washington is mere promises or mere verbal commitments that are not applied or honoured. One ray of hope still, comes in the offering and that is the intifada, waged by the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation, continued the writer.

The View from Fourth Circle

Pan-Arab nationalism: is it dying or being born?

By Rami G. Khouri

IT IS intellectually chic in the West, and among many beaten Arabs who would like to spend the rest of their lives riding golf carts around Los Angeles suburbs, to proclaim that Arab nationalism has failed and has died a merciful death. This simple argument coincides conveniently with the popular Western view that the Arabs should stop trying to forge a unified or integrated national force and instead they should submit quietly to the realities of the West's techno-commercial-information dominance of the world.

Many Arabs are happy to roll over and do as they're told. Dejected by their tragic dependence on foreign food, money, guns, capital goods and political protection, many Arabs nevertheless go along with the prevalent inclination to chase contracts and money, to do whatever is required of them stay alive and fed and generally to bow down to the new gods of global commercialism. To confuse individual Arabs whose identity and humanity have died with the wholesale death of a national ethos that may define hundreds of millions of people is to make a very unfortunate mistake — if it is, indeed, a mistake and not an unconscious geopolitical goal.

The idea that Arab nationalism has died and been replaced by a more pragmatic, realistic recognition of the need to generate an income and stay alive by any means is a peculiarly Western, Anglo-Saxon concept; it smacks heavily of the ways of corporate marketing managers, who speak of our region's importance in terms of commodities and markets, and who use a vocabulary whose primal verbs are to sell, to penetrate markets and to generate profits.

Many in the West would like Arab nationalism to die because the idea of an integrated, coordinated, wholesome Arab World scares or threatens them; this is probably due to historical reasons, including, a) the legacy of cultural or imperial friction between the Middle East and Europe and b) the legacy of European and Mediterranean powers' need to control the strategic geography and/or natural resources of the Middle East.

This view is complemented today by a new perception of Arab-Islamic society as being the last serious alternative to, or holdout against, the global dominance of the Western consumer-industrial society and its emphasis of individualism and materialism. Therefore, many in the West and in Israel portray the Arab-Islamic world as a dangerous and threatening source of political extremism, terror, military violence, religious fanaticism, and inhuman laws and cultural habits — a veritable land of oriental demons that is not only alien to and incompatible with Western values, but that also threatens Western lifestyles.

The death of Arab nationalism is an easy shorthand form of proclaiming the end of any chance that the Arab-Islamic world might snap out of its cycle of regression and mediocrity and achieve its enormous potential. Many in the West speak of the end of Arab nationalism in the same manner that they speak of the defeat of communism and Marxism — as demons slayed

and threats that have been vanquished.

What we hear from the West, though, is very different from what we hear from the Arab people themselves. At the grassroots level throughout the Arab World, pan-Arab national identity and Islam are still the two most powerful trans-national forces that define the political expressions and aspirations of the vast majority of Arabs. I would suggest, therefore, that the real status of pan-Arab national identity is not that it has died, but that it has never been tried in a realistic and rational manner. Equally important, though, is that the pan-Arab national identity I speak of, and that ordinary Arabs throughout the region also express in their own ways, is not the anti-Western romanticism of the 1950s and 1960s; rather it is a more practical recognition of the urgency of pan-Arab coordination and integration as the most meaningful antidote to our current ailments.

The term Arab nationalism commonly refers to the movement led by Gamal Abdul Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, which spawned many attempts by different combinations of Arab countries to unite, integrate, or form confederation or unions. None of those attempts succeeded — and thus Arab nationalism has never been tried — because every attempt at inter-state Arab integration or union was conceived by self-appointed, non-accountable leaders, usually as an expedient and often transparently self-serving political convenience. Never in this century have any combination of Arab leaders turned to their people and asked them what they feel and what they want; never have Arab leaders sought to implement pan-Arab policies based on the freely expressed sentiments of their own people. How can Arab nationalism have died if the people of the Arab Nation have never told us what Arab nationalism is?

After nearly a century of various forms of Arab struggle against Western imperialism and colonialism and, simultaneously, against indigenous Arab autocratic rule, we still do not have any idea of what the majority of Arabs really desire in terms of their domestic political systems or their relations with other Arabs. This is the harsh consequence of cumulative decades of foreign domination of the Arab region, followed by domestic pacification, all of which resulted in the grotesque modern pan-Arab legacy of national dependence, intellectual lassitude, cultural exhaustion, and political weakness.

The important and exciting prospect of gradual democratisation and liberalisation throughout much of the Arab World is that it will permit the Arab people, for the first time in their modern history, to reverse these trends; and to speak their hearts — to express in political terms what they want and how they want to be associated with their fellow Arabs. Democratisation will finally provide us with the opportunity to learn what pan-Arab national identity really means.

I am convinced that the real basis of pan-Arab nationalism is not the emotional, reactionary, often frenzied anti-Western

street theatre that we saw during the Nasser years and that lingers, in slightly different forms, in parts of this region. The real driving force for pan-Arab identity and cooperation will be the recognition that only through meaningful integration of the region's human and natural resources can any of its inhabitants look forward to a reasonable quality of life as free, dignified and sovereign people.

The single most important political fact of life in this region is that the Arab population of 230 million people today will not stabilise until it reaches nearly 700 million people around the year 2050 — regardless of what is done to reduce fertility rates. If we add the populations of Israel, Iran and Turkey (who also compete for the region's finite resources, especially water and arable land) today's Middle Eastern/North African population of 350 million people will not stabilise before it reaches some 900 million people around the year 2050 — only two generations away.

The pressures to survive — simply to eat and drink — will compel rational to recognise that they can only aspire to progress and a decent life if they integrate their resources and allow a free flow of people, goods, ideas, money and natural resources across borders — so that shortages and imbalances can be redressed, productivity enhanced and complementarities exploited. Above and beyond food and water, the challenge of providing housing, jobs, education and social services for 700 million Arabs will oblige us to move towards political and economic systems that can meet our basic human needs. Such systems will closely reflect the federalist patterns that pertained in the United States, Italy and Germany in the 19th century and the unionist/integrationist trends that have characterised modern Europe since the 1960s.

This will happen only after we make the historic transition from our modern legacy of foreign domination, national fragmentation and indigenous political autocracy towards a future of genuine sovereignty, national reconstitution, regional cooperation, and a more participatory and accountable domestic political culture. Free and thoughtful Arabs will inevitably move towards a pan-Arab national identity because this is the natural convergence point between the common roots of their cultural identity and the common denominator for their future survival and their collective economic and social progress.

Rather than presiding over the death of Arab national identity, I think we are, in fact, witnessing its birth — a genuine and durable pan-Arabism that was first conceived in the post-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of the first quarter of this century, that survived the false labour pains of mid-century's anti-Zionist diversion, and that has started to come to life in the midst of the pan-Arab deterioration of the last quarter of this century.

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Israeli electorate veers away from peace

By Peretz Kidron

THE government of Yitzhak Rabin can find little cause for gratification in recent opinion polls. The pollsters report a serious erosion in support for Rabin's Labour Party and his left-leaning allies of Meretz. Were elections to be held now, the two parties would probably lose half a dozen or more seats in the 120-member Knesset. Such a setback would wipe out their present slim parliamentary majority, paving the way for a Likud coalition with the far right and the religious parties.

Even more striking, given that Israel's next prime minister will be elected by direct vote of the electorate, is the poll measuring public approval of leading politicians. With nearly 30 per cent support, Mr. Rabin remains the single most popular candidate — but he retains that lead solely because the 47 per cent right-wing vote is split between Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu and hardliner Raphael Eytan of Tzomet. Should the nationalist parties agree on a single candidate, Mr. Rabin's prospects would be dismal.

These findings reflect an amazing turn-about in the public mood, away from the heady September days when Mr. Rabin's historic agreement with PLO leader Yasser Arafat set off a wave of peace euphoria which even managed to suck in broad sections of the right-wing constituency. By holding out the promise of peace, Mr. Rabin's bold demerch drew a measure of popular support

Labour has not enjoyed since the 60s. With Mr. Rabin riding high on a wave of personal popularity, Optimists foresaw Labour restored to the status of "permanent party of government" it enjoyed under Ben Gurion and Golda Meir.

Municipal elections

Having enjoyed so clear a lead so recently, how did Labour contrive to lose it within a matter of weeks? At the tactical level of everyday politics, the party's own leadership is heavily to blame. Labour bungled badly in the 2 November municipal elections: fielding unpopular candidates and waging a campaign notable mainly for heavy-handed mudslinging. Labour allowed Likud to win in two of Israel's three major cities as well as dozens of smaller councils. Mr. Rabin compounded the setback when, in a last-minute bid to drum up support for his party's candidates, he presented the local elections as a vote of confidence in his government and its peace policy; Labour's ensuing defeat was promptly construed as a slap in the face for the prime minister, while providing a much-needed tonic for the reeling Likud leadership. Facing Likud's slick and intelligent campaign, Labour managed to make every mistake in the political book.

But however costly such tactical ineptitude, Labour's troubles lie principally at the strategic level, arising out of the public disillusionment with the peace process. A majority of Israelis hailed the Oslo

Accords with the PLO, first and foremost because they seemed to promise an end to the bloodshed which has bedevilled the country for generations. But just as Labour initially profited from those rising hopes, their collapse threatens to cost the party dear.

In the early days after the Israel-PLO accord, events seemed to bear out the optimism. Israeli soldiers in the occupied territories, accustomed to showers of stones and Molotov cocktails, were handed bunches of flowers instead. Israeli television, hitherto virtually off-limits to Palestinians, now granted lavish airtime to ordinary people from Gaza and the West Bank, whose genuine and unmistakable enthusiasm for the new era of peace — frequently expressed in fluent and eloquent Hebrew — helped to win over sceptics.

But, inevitably, the honeymoon was short-lived. On patrol and at roadblocks, nervous Israeli troops maintained their shoot-first policy; and Palestinian casualties, though sharply reduced, continued to trickle into hospitals and morgues. Breakaway Palestinian groups continued wanton attacks on individual Israelis, seeking to inflict casualties by a variety of means.

The Rabin government sought to play down the violence by dismissing the perpetrators as a lunatic fringe. When right-wing critics pointed to the killings as proof that the Palestinians were not keeping their side of the bargain, Mr. Rabin and his ministers cited

Israeli intelligence sources to claim that Palestinian resistance units, owing allegiance to the PLO, had been instructed to halt violence against Israelis, just as Arafat had pledged. When vengeful settlers rampaged through Palestinian towns and villages in response to the attacks, the prime minister denounced their excesses and those of the Palestinian opposition in virtually identical terms.

The renewed tide of violence and counter-violence posed a grave challenge to Rabin. Writing in Ha'aretz, columnist Yoel Markus put it succinctly: "Terrorism is the main political problem confronting the government as it takes the road of peace. Not merely because terrorism reinforces the extremists on our side, but mainly because the government's principal base of support is liable to slip away. The government releases Arafat from responsibility for the attacks just because Fateh has laid down its weapons, as he claims; it is doubtful whether the public will long accept this."

Mr. Rabin repeatedly assured the Israeli public that the PLO was keeping its word. But that claim collapsed when it emerged that the murder of a settler from Beit El, near Ramallah — initially attributed to Hamas — had in fact been carried out by a maverick unit of Mr. Arafat's own Fateh. When the PLO chairman responded to U.S. and Israeli pressure with public denunciation of his wayward followers, Israel's official circles

declared themselves satisfied. But ordinary Israelis noted that Mr. Arafat's rebuke referred merely to a breach of discipline, and contained no moral reprimand.

It was a striking illustration of the newly forged interdependence which now characterises Israeli-Palestinian relations: increasingly, Mr. Arafat's sins — real or imagined — are chalked up against Mr. Rabin. The reverse holds equally true: Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin now each have a keen interest in each other's successes and failures. In the often gloomy atmosphere surrounding the peace talks, and the daily crises which threaten to derail them, the main glimmer of hope stems from this tacit alliance between the chairman of the PLO and the prime minister of Israel.

Reviving hope

But until that unwritten pact produces results striking enough to vindicate him with the Israeli public, Mr. Rabin must resort to damage control, principally by reviving the mood of hopefulness which surrounded the Oslo Accords.

Optimism is fuelled by daily portrayals of the prospects opening up since Israel's recognition of the PLO, with Arab states standing in line to do business. Politicians and senior officials feed the media with glowing reports of peace and prosperity around the corner, particularly in relation to Jordan.

Newspaper headlines quote "sources in Jerusalem" announcing "an agreement in principle on peace with Jordan", and promising "a breakthrough within weeks". Two days later, similar headlines heralded a further "agreement in principle" with Jordan on cooperation in the field of finance and banking. King Hussein was quoted as suggesting "implementation of elements of peace before signature of a formal treaty": an Israeli minister claimed that "everything is tied up and signed" with Jordan. Even the Likud leaders hastened to clamber on board the Jordanian bandwagon: Netanyahu sent a public message to King Hussein, affirming Likud support for the emerging arrangement — Middle East International, London.

LETTERS

Alternative ways

To the Editor:

Will the construction of more roads really lead to greater traffic safety?

Neither a new Amman-Irbid highway nor building any other additional road is a real solution to the problem. Increased road capacity attracts more traffic; it is like digging a ditch in a marsh. After some time the ditch will be filled with water. Generally speaking, the risk of accidents increases with the mileage. So, first of all, traffic has to be avoided to get more security. The way to do it is by reducing the amount of kilometres driven. For example car pooling, shortening and combining trips are ways of reducing the number of cars on the road. Moreover, unavoidable trips should be — as far as possible — offered alternative means of transportation, like going by bus, taxi, bike or on foot, which are safer means and engines of the big Amman municipal buses is long overdue; in some areas the public transport in Jordan is already very good. Exceptions make the night service and network and departure information.

Dangerous parts and junctions of roads must be altered and reconstructed. But never expect "safe traffic". Even the "safest-built" road will cause accidents, just because it is safe. More recklessly. The level of danger they accept remains the same (risk compensation).

In conclusion, do not waste money for producing more car traffic, accidents and pollution, as well as town and landscape destruction. Use it for safer kinds of transportation, which are also more compatible with nature and the population, especially children.

Arndt Schwab,
Amman 11123.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name, address and telephone number, and be accompanied by a return address. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Clinton's ups and downs likely to continue in '94

By Gene Gibbons
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Ask anyone in the White House about the first year of Bill Clinton's presidency and they will probably compare it to a roller coaster ride. What's more, the in-crowd is braced for more thrills and chills in 1994.

That is not to say Mr. Clinton has been unsuccessful — on the contrary, he posted an impressive legislative record. Even Senate Republican leader Bob Dole says the Democrat can take "a lot of satisfaction" from his string of wins in Congress.

But Mr. Clinton's popularity has risen and sunk in a dizzying sine curve since his inauguration, leading Esquire magazine's Walter Shapiro to call him the first "poll-spoke president".

"It's been kind of a roller coaster year," acknowledges White House Communications Director Mark Gearan.

Beside the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and budget legislation that takes a stab at cutting spending, Mr. Clinton's trophies included a bill that allows workers to take leave

for family and medical emergencies, creation of a national service corps and passage of the Brady Bill, which requires a waiting period and background check for the purchase of a handgun.

"He got a lot of things done this year... nothing major but things that Republican presidents didn't push or sustained vetoes on," Mr. Dole said in an interview.

In spite of his record, Mr. Clinton, the first Democrat in the White House in 12 years, has the highest negative poll rating of any first-year chief executive since Gerald Ford, the country's only unelected president. Mr. Ford incurred public wrath in 1974 by pardoning his predecessor, Richard Nixon, of any crime related to the watergate scandal.

Some of the continuing doubts about Mr. Clinton's

leadership stem from gaffes that preceded or followed many successes — his bungling of several appointments, waffling on issues like gays in the military and Bosnia, and missteps on matters like the White House travel office flap and his much-publicised (Mr. Clinton says wrongly reported) 200 haircut.

Stephen Wayne a Georgetown University political expert, says another reason for Mr. Clinton's image problem is "he moved from one thing to another so quickly that people didn't have time to absorb what he had done." He added: "One doesn't have the sense that there is a discernible direction or focus to what he's doing. People can't sort it out... because of its pace and because of its diversity."

Mr. Clinton, a man with eclectic interests, an explosive temper and a gargantuan

appetite for work, is not about to slow his pace or refine his agenda in the next 12 months.

"I got hired to fight for the folks in this country, to face real problems. And any time you face problems in specifics instead of in the abstract, you're going to be misunderstood, and you're going to have a lot of opposition," he said in a Rolling Stone interview recently.

In addition to the health care reform, a highly controversial endeavour at the very top of his 1994 agenda, Mr. Clinton plans to push for a sweeping overhaul of the welfare system and passage of a tough new anti-crime package that would further restrict unrestricted public access to guns.

He will also have to try to fend off a conservative push for a constitutional amendment calling for a balanced budget, and, if a new world trade agreement is reached, take on many of the same interest groups he outmanoeuvred in the NAFTA fight to get the pact through Congress.

As Clinton and company know only too well, it will take a miracle to keep these priorities from being pushed to the background by an international flare-up.

سوراء الصالح

The pursuit of happiness took a rat-race detour

By Richard Reeves

DALLAS — "An enormous upheaval was needed to take leisure and the good life from the exclusive grasp of the high-living wealthy few and place it within reach of everybody on Elm Street, USA. The upheaval came originally when several powerful forces worked in unison: an expanding economy, mass production, enlightened capitalism and strong labour unions. Today the changeover is being dramatically hastened by a powerful new force called automation. It produces even more leisure, more and better goods."

That is from Life magazine, dated Dec. 28, 1959. "Special Issue: The Good Life. Zestful Americans Enjoy Their New Leisure," was the headline across the cover. A montage of colour photographs showed Americans at play. A woman trying out a new 35mm camera, others painting or gardening. Men scuba diving, reading in their own small libraries, making furniture in their home workshops.

The magazine was laid out at

a garage sale here, an artifact of another time. "Leisure is the purpose of work," the magazine editorialised.

"The quality of its leisure activity sets the tone of any society, defines its version of the Good Life and measures the level of its civilisation."

Advertisements emphasised the same themes. Pan American Airways — "World's Most Experienced Airline" — touted its new jet service to four continents. Bell Telephone boasted that it was experimenting with telephones that would have push buttons instead of dials. In a section on the future, the magazine talked about shorter work hours, medical breakthroughs including diagnostic machines and organ replacement, satellite communications and home videotape, longer vacations and more disposable income.

And most of that happened — sort of. Life magazine is no longer a weekly reaching 6.5 million homes. Bell Telephone was broken up and Pan Am went bust. Why didn't American life work out the way Life thought it would? To be sure,

there were a few cautionary notes in the magazine's 192 pages. A rich politician, Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, saw it this way: "We have gone soft. The slow corrosion of luxury is already beginning to show."

The magazine's editorial also projected a dazzling ignorance of the world around it in 1960: "Americans have now virtually eliminated one of the chief drives behind all human effort, namely the fear of poverty. What can substitute for the old drive against hunger and for work satisfaction? Although automation releases some people to more interesting jobs, it may be that an automated society still lacks the compulsion to excellence and 'disinterested' achievement. And this may be the missing component of our continuing quest."

The politician became president and directed American energy and resources not towards leisure or luxury; he aimed the riches of the nation at the destruction of an alien system, communism. Automation,

it turned out, was not a one-step process; each stage of its evolution eliminated some kinds of human work and created needs — and more and more Americans were consumed by the stress of keeping up, of being forced to learn new jobs or skills to replace the ones taken over by machines.

That certainly affected my life. I graduated from college that year, 1960, as a mechanical engineer, knowing a great deal about slide rules, steam pumps and vacuum tubes. Within a few years, Texas Instruments, among others, was selling everything I knew for about \$10. You could get most of me in a pocket calculator.

The drive towards new prosperity and new leisure was not exclusively American. Life magazine's editorial copy did not mention other countries, except as places for Americans to see, courtesy of the democratised travel made possible by the jets of Pan Am. But tucked in a small corner of Page 136 was an advertisement for "The world's smallest, best-designed transistor radio"

by a company called Tokyo Shibaura Electric — Toshiba for short.

Most of all, I think, the pursuit of happiness celebrated by Life became the pursuit of more and better goods — and that meant the pursuit of money. The race to keep us was fueled by easier and easier credit.

One television, one car, one house, one wife or husband was not enough for the good life — or so we thought. More and more expensive education was needed for the good jobs of the good life. And it was work and salary that were prized, not leisure and civilisation — one result being that women who did not work could not defend themselves economically or socially.

One way or another over these 30 years Americans downgraded leisure and cheapened work at the same time. In 1960, Americans thought the rat race was ending. But for most of them it was just moving to the fast track — International Herald Tribune.

Indian election chief takes on the system

By Michael Battye
Reuters

NEW DELHI — Indian politicians often called him a mad dog. One magazine said he was a bull who carried around his own China shop.

Top civil servants described T.N. Seshan — a small, portly man with a bald head — as a "polished megalomaniac," but only after he called them polished call girls, an insult he admitted was "impolitic," even though he meant it.

But Mr. Seshan, the blunt-talking man who runs elections in a country that proudly calls itself the world's biggest democracy, is showing signs of turning from the ogre portrayed just a few weeks ago in many newspapers into a hero.

In November, he ran six regional elections in which only a handful of people were killed rather than the usual scores, intimidation was relatively scarce and rigging attempts were infinitely fewer.

The turnout was higher than expected and few candidates complained they had lost unfairly.

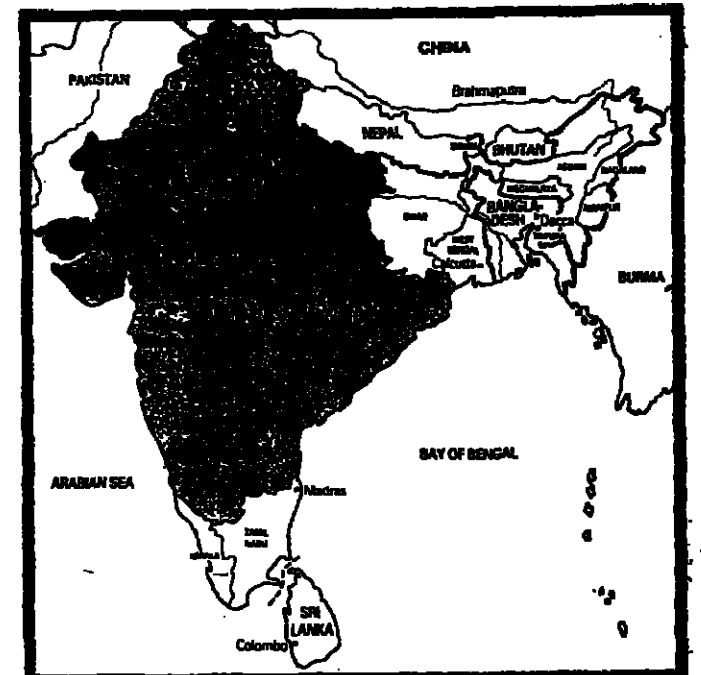
Suddenly, editorial writers and columnists who had pilloried Mr. Seshan during highly public battles with a government trying to curb his powers, and opposition parties that once tried to impeach him, found him worthy of praise.

Mr. Seshan told Reuters he had not wanted a job he thought was dull when he was appointed chief election commissioner in December 1990 to preside over an electorate of 540 million.

Now, still facing what he called "most seriously elaborate hostility from the central government" of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, he shows no signs of leaving.

He is embroiled in a battle with the government he has taken to the supreme court over whether or not he is autonomous, can punish corrupt election officials and choose the people he wants to supervise polls.

"If (the commission) is subservient, you can forget about free and fair elections and this



country will become a banana republic," he said. "I don't run from any field of battle."

Parts of India, especially the teeming north, are notorious for election abuses, often cheerfully admitted to in private by politicians who boast of stuffing ballot boxes, preventing people voting and provoking violence if they look like losing.

Hundreds of people with criminal charges pending against them have stood for office, seeking power, money and influence in a political system grown increasingly corrupt over the years.

"A very large percentage (of politicians) is not free from sin," as Mr. Seshan puts it.

Mr. Seshan said that when he took over the commission he found a willingness among politicians to use all kinds of measures to win elections, "so much so that anything goes."

Local civil servants and police were committed, contaminated and collusive — or at least too frightened to act against politicians who could kill their careers, he said.

"The election commission has been guilty over the past 15, 20 years of turning the other cheek," he said. "One of

the reasons I am extremely unpopular is I tell people I have only one cheek because my face is rounded like a football."

A large number of people had lost all faith in the election system being vaguely free and fair. People said only a mug would take part.

Four of the November elections followed Mr. Rao's dismissal of Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state governments after the destruction of a northern mosque by Hindu zealots.

The mosque's destruction set off nationwide violence in which more than 2,000 people were killed, most of them Muslims. Mr. Rao fired the governments for not containing it and imposed federal rule.

Mr. Seshan said the absence of a party in power that could manipulate the police and bureaucracy helped make the elections peaceful.

But election observers had suggested the main reason was "the feeling on the part of voters, candidates, the civil service and police that the election commission meant business, that there was a referee prepared to blow the whistle," he said.

Rabin rules out self-rule deal in 10 days

(Continued from page 1)

mini-crises and perhaps also crises," Mr. Rabin said. "There are also games which are called brinkmanship, and if we will be strong and firm, we will succeed at realising what we want."

"I have no intention — and I'm sure that would be the government's stance — to concede on the security issues. But I will add: I already said December 13 isn't a sacred date," he told Israel Radio before the meeting.

Mr. Rabin held out hope of some action despite the delay: "It won't be a question of gestures. The problem will be whether I will decide to take a few unilateral steps or not."

But Agriculture Minister Yaacov Tsuri said such steps had not been discussed in the cabinet.

Israeli cabinet ministers said border control was the main hurdle to the start of Palestinian self-rule.

"The main obstacle I can say for this moment is who will

control the external borders between Israel and Jordan and Israel and Egypt... this is the major obstacle," Health Minister Haim Ramon told reporters.

Ministers were adamant Israel had to retain control during the five-year self-rule period agreed in September.

"I think that Arafat... thinks he is going to be president of a state. That is not in the agreement... he must understand that in this period the government of Israel will not give up its defence of the borders," Culture Minister Shulamit Aloni said.

But Ms. Aloni said she believed Mr. Arafat would give up his "wishful thinking."

Ministers said gestures to ease Palestinian disappointment at the delay like a token withdrawal or prisoner release were not discussed in the cabinet.

In the Hague, Mr. Arafat said he did not expect the delay to spark an upsurge of violence in the occupied territories. "The violence has increased

because there was an escalation (of attacks) from the armed settlers against our people. We hope this will be settled and controlled by the Israeli government."

Mr. Arafat said he had fruitful talks but would not say whether he had secured any aid or investment for the fledgling Palestinian territories.

"I'm not just looking for economic support, I'm looking

for moral support, political support and the implementation of the declaration of principles," he said.

The British government said it was disappointed at the delay in starting the Israeli withdrawal.

A Foreign Office spokesman said the delay was "disappointing" and Britain "hopes that an agreement will be finalised soon."

Elections scramble

Russian scene

(Continued from page 1)

government considers that the adoption of the constitution by the Russian people is a good decision.

The British government in London welcomed Russia's adoption of a new constitution as a "historic event," saying the charter laid the basis for democracy and human rights.

But world leaders also expressed concern about the success of Mr. Zhirinovskiy.

One of the strongest warnings came from the Norwegian government, whose Foreign Minister Johan Joergen Holst said Norway will find it more difficult to negotiate border issues with the new Russia.

Israelis kill 3

(Continued from page 1)

talked about will not be enough. It will be postponed again because the problems are too big to be solved in 10 days," said Sami Abu Samhandane, one of the new generation of Fatah leaders in Gaza.

Islamic fundamentalists like Jamal Khudari from Gaza City welcomed the delay and saw it as proof that agreement could not be achieved.

"This agreement is doomed," he said. "Violence, killing and destruction were increased by this agreement and now we will see more and more."

Attacks continued Sunday night with the shooting and wounding of an Israeli bus driver in the West Bank. Shlomo Ohana, 28, of Beersheba, was in serious condition with a gunshot wound in the chest after his bus was ambushed outside the city of Hebron, a flashpoint of Arab-Israeli violence lately in the occupied West Bank.

TO OUR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES AT

SAFEWAY

Then a ploughman said, Speak to us of Work.
And he answered saying:

"You have been told that life is darkness,
and in your weariness you echo what was said by the weary.
That life is indeed darkness save when there is urge,
and all urge is blind save when there is knowledge.
And all knowledge is vain save when there is work,
And all work is empty save when there is love;
And when you work with love
you bind yourself to yourself,
and to one another,
and to God."

KHALIL GIBRAN

With our best wishes
A D P R O

Most Asian stock markets surge in bullish sentiment

TOKYO (R) — Most Asian stock markets posted steep gains Monday with Tokyo boosted by export-oriented electronics amid a weak yen, brokers said.

Share prices in Singapore, Taipei and Sydney surged on bullish sentiment.

Hong Kong stocks closed modestly higher as late bargain hunting outweighed profit-taking, brokers said.

The blue chip Hang Seng index ended up 20.48 points, or 0.20 per cent, to finish a volatile day at 10,248.59. It opened firmer to touch a high of 10,272 before institutional profit-taking dragged the index down 126 points in early trade.

Brokers said some overseas institutions were buying on weakness, although few took major new positions.

In Taiwan, waves of buying from both foreign and domestic players propelled share prices to close at an eight-month high, while turnover also jumped to its highest level since March, brokers said.

The index surged 178.23 points to end at 4,929.81.

Foreign interest in financials boosted late buying across the board. "Some people sold at mid-morning to take quick profits, but more people jumped in. The buying craze just cannot stop at this moment," said Albert Lin of Gol-

den Securities.

In Singapore, share prices closed at a new high of 2,245.27 for the third straight trading day on record turnover, driven by frenzied retail and institutional buying, brokers said.

The index, up 24.87 points from Friday's closing high, compares with an all-time high of 2,262.58 set intra-day today.

Bank shares and warrants were among key gainers while Malaysia's Genting BHD and Samad Holdings also rose. In Australia, a record high on Wall Street coupled with rising metals prices underpinned demand for resources stocks and pushed the All-

Ordinaries index to close 9.6 points up at 2,094.5.

"It was a good day overall — continuing demand for heavyweight metal took the rest of the market up," said a Hambros equities broker.

Tokyo stocks closed up for a third straight trading day, with rallies in blue-chip electricals led by Sony Corp. lifting sentiment despite an underlying mood of political uncertainty.

The weaker yen also fuelled buying of electrical exporters. Japan's main share index Nikkei 225 average ended at 17,327.33, up 69.80 from Friday with estimated 210 million share turnover.

Russian election outcome may slow economic reforms

MOSCOW (R) — A strong showing for nationalists and communists in Russia's parliamentary election will make it harder to pursue far-reaching economic reforms, casting doubts over new Western financial aid, economists said Monday.

Mikhail Khazin, of the government's Centre for Economic Reforms, said a parliament dominated by nationalists and conservatives would try to derail financial stabilisation.

"We know their methods — given money to everybody, hampering structural changes, trying to preserve the military complex in its present form," he said.

But the economists said the apparent decision by voters to approve a new constitution drawn up by President Boris Yeltsin would limit the damage the conservatives could do.

"Provided Yeltsin's constitution is passed they will not be able to do anything drastic. But there will always be resistance," Mr. Khazin said.

Mr. Yeltsin called the election in September, dissolving the old legislature in an attempt to break a deadlock between conservatives and reformers which had paralysed economic policy making for much of the year.

He later put forward a new constitution, giving himself sweeping new powers and limiting parliament's role.

But the president's hopes for more supportive parliament faded like a mirage Monday. Kremlin officials said ultra-nationalists and communists looked set to win twice as many seats in the new Russian parliament as reformist parties.

The right-wing Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was likely to be the biggest single party in the new legislature, the officials said.

The conservatives argue that funds must be provided to prevent economic collapse. Reforms have been too painful and Russia's impoverished population has suffered too much, they say.

But Deputy Prime Minister Boris Fyodorov, one of the key architects of Russia's reform plans, said he had no intention of allowing the reforms to slow.

"We shall not turn back," he told the British Broadcasting Corporation. "At least I will not slow down."

Mr. Fyodorov admitted it would be hard for the government to work with the new legislature, but said the new parliament would probably still have more reformers than the old one.

"Here at least there will be dozens of people with clearly stated aims," he said.

A Western economist said it would be hard to keep reforms on track if parliament opposed every government move. If inflation rose sharply next year it was hard to imagine Western aid agencies stepping in with new financial help.

"The government is going to face the temptation to back down if the going gets tough," he said. "That has always been the case but it is going to get even stronger now."

But economists agreed that the structural changes introduced in the two years since Russian reforms got under way were unlikely to be reversed.

"We have seen a lot of changes in the last two years — free prices for just about everything, the convertibility of the rouble, a floating central bank refinancing rate, widespread privatisation," the Western analyst said.

"Not even Zhirinovskiy wants to renationalise property. I do not think those structural changes are seriously at risk."

U.S. banks face busy 1994 on Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. banking industry, after getting scant attention from Congress in 1993, faces a rash of legislation in 1994 as well as new regulations that could chart its fate for years.

Lawmakers and the White House want to create a single bank regulator. Moves also are afoot to permit banks to operate branches across state lines, and some lawmakers are likely to try to use that bill to curb banks' power to sell insurance.

The banks also must confront bills and proposed regulations governing their lending and services in poorer communities.

"There's a full, meaningful legislative plate that will affect every consumer and every banker," said Kenneth Guenther of the Independent Bankers Association of America (IBAA), which represents small-town banks.

Said Daniel Smith, chairman of First of America Bank Corp of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and president of the American Bankers Association: "We're headed for a kind of bumper year as far as banking legislation is concerned."

This all comes as the industry is racking up its best earnings year ever and the outlook for 1994 is good.

Next year also could prove to be the most important year in Washington for banks since 1991 when Congress passed landmark legislation meant to provide an early warning signal of problem banks and prevent a disaster like that which befell savings and loan institutions.

In 1993 only one big bill was passed: Congress agreed, after months of arguing and with strings attached, to provide up to \$26.3 billion to wind up the savings and loan bailout.

Among the top items for 1994 is the White House plan to merge the regulatory duties of the four federal bank regulators into an "independent"

federal banking commission. Although similar efforts have failed in the past, legislation this time is given better odds of passage.

The senior Democrat and Republican on the Senate Banking Committee support the move, as does the Democratic chairman of the House Banking Committee. Backers argue the plan would cut banks' costs and make the banking system more efficient.

Not so, says the powerful Federal Reserve central bank, it warns it needs a "hands-on" role in supervising banks to ensure a stable financial system and carry out its role of influencing interest rates.

Also, the senior Republican on the House Banking Committee frets the idea would put too much power in one agency and would risk injecting politics into bank regulation.

The banking industry has given the plan mixed reviews. Another key legislative battle is likely to occur over allowing banks to operate branches across state lines. The White House backs the plan but has balked at a move in the Senate to use the legislation as a vehicle to restrict banks' ability to sell insurance.

Many bankers welcome interstate branching but flatly oppose any curbs on their insurance powers.

Other pieces of legislation would provide \$382 million in seed money for community development institutions that lead to poor areas, and would impose tougher requirements on firms that compile data on consumers' credit records.

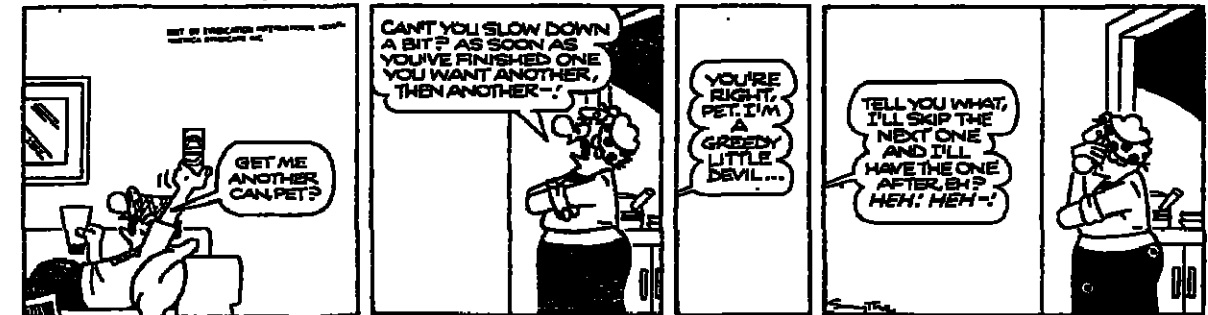
What's more, bank regulators have just proposed rules to get banks to make more loans in low-income communities.

Meanwhile, banks are healthy. They have better quality loans on their books and have disposed of bad ones. They also have capitalised on low interest rates paid to depositors.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Economists fear Japan's worst post-war recession

TOKYO (R) — Japan's mighty economy is likely to record its worst performance in the post-war period this fiscal year and even a hoped-for stimulative package would have a limited impact on growth next year, economists have said.

"There is a fear of a second year of minus growth and that this recession will turn into the worst recession in the post-war period," said a report by NLI Research Institute.

Private economists as well as businessmen say Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's most urgent task is to formulate a stimulative economic package including income tax cuts, de-regulation and steps to boost property market liquidity.

Hopes that such a package would be unveiled last week were dashed when the Hosokawa's coalition ran into trouble over its pending decision on whether to open the nation's closed rice market to help world trade talks succeed by Dec. 15.

Opposition party stalling in parliament has also delayed passage of a supplementary budget needed to fund a September economic bailout package worth six trillion yen (\$55.5 billion).

The lower house passed the extra budget Wednesday but the bill is now being debated in the upper house.

Cabinet Secretary Masayoshi Takemura told a business lunch Thursday that the government planned to unveil its policy on income tax cuts after parliament adopts the supplementary budget, probably in the next few days.

Economists already expect the economy to contract in the business year to March 1994, underperforming the zero growth posted in 1974/75 when the economy reeled from high oil prices.

Gross domestic product (GDP) — total output of goods and services less net investment income from abroad — is

expected to fall between 0.3 per cent and 1.1 per cent in 1993/94, according to private economic researchers.

Economists earlier said they expect GDP data to show a decline of 2.5-3 per cent on an annualised basis in the July-September period. That would be the second consecutive quarterly decline.

To cope with this, economists said policymakers must combine another cut in the official discount rate, already at an historic low of 1.75 per cent, with other measures.

These would include large-scale income tax cuts, de-regulation, moves to increase liquidity of the property market, steps to help banks write off bad loans, and a stimulative budget for 1994/95.

"For the BOJ (Bank of Japan) to cut the discount rate in tandem with government measures such as income tax cuts is fully possible as the timing of ineffective monetary policy," said Yoshio Suzuki, chief economist at Nomura Research Institute Ltd.

While pressure on the BOJ to act if politicians dither could rise, a rate cut in isolation would have only limited impact, economists said.

"Even a 0.5 percentage point rate cut would only boost gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.1 per cent," said Tatsuo Yamamura, chief economist at NLI Research Institute. "It would help to reduce corporations' interest burden but to be effective, must be part of a stimulative package."

Still, even a comprehensive package might do no more than boost GDP growth by at best 1.3 per cent, according to a private think tank forecast.

At worst, GDP could fall again in 1994/95 by 0.4 per cent, according to a report by Nomura Research Institute.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY DECEMBER 14, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: If you don't stick with proven methods your pending plans with others may backfire. You must forget emotions where practical affairs are concerned. Be patient with a family tie that is having a problem.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Consider well how to better handle correspondence and outside routines after which you will be able to get your home in perfect working order.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Arrange whatever has to do with transportation interests in the morning then you will be able to have happiness at home with members of your own clan.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Go after ways to make more income and increase your goodies in life after while later you can be off to see and enjoy humorous, delightful contacts.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You have every sort of chance to uncover information formerly unavailable to you after which push forward to gain your personal longings.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Consult with good friends for what they will do to aid your progress, then you can have a wonderful time in private with your intimate companion.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Whatever you have in mind of a worldly nature can be

planned with care now, then you can turn your attention to your more subjective interests.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Look at what you are doing of a civic or career nature and improve as much as possible, then go after benefits held up from you before this time.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Look at where you stand in business in a more organised fashion, then you will be able to be off to interesting, fascinating persons and places.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can reach an understanding with partners that cover all phases of your activities, then you will have enthusiasm to carry through with promises made.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You see many ways you can improve the tasks you have agreed to do in the morning after which get off with partners and associates to new ventures.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You see how to be more happy and satisfied with pleasures and hobbies early while later you can get your teeth into fascinating tasks, finish them.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A more well rounded success at home can be envisioned by you early while later you can take your family out to some amusements to get their approval.

THE BETTER HALF

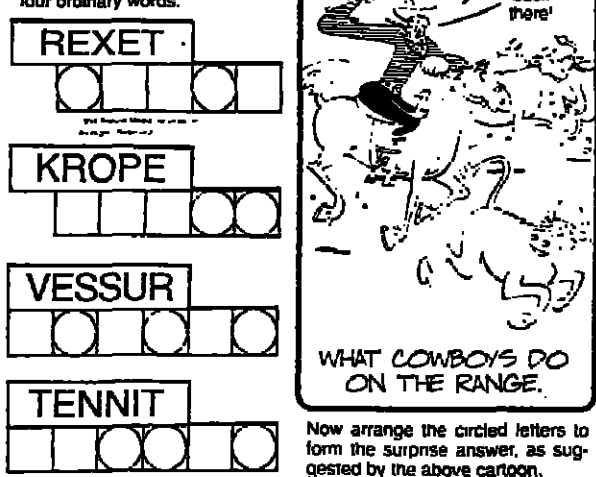
By Harris



"Stanley, are you whispering sweet nothings in my ear... or is that snoring?"

JUMBLE

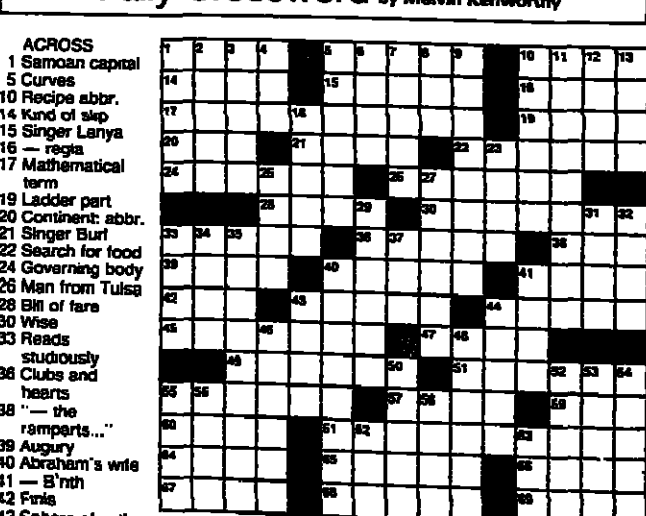
Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



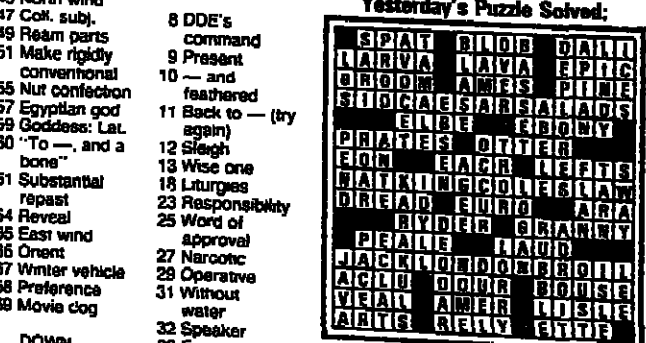
Answer here: _____ (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: HASTY FINAL BARROW PLAGUE
Answer: The lazy winners preferred these shoes — LOAFERS

THE Daily Crossword by Melvin Kamworthy



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:



هكذا صحت القصة

Moroccan airline makes \$10.6m profit

RABAT (R) — Morocco's Royal Air Maroc (RAM) made a profit last year of 102.3 million dirhams (\$10.6 million), making it one of the few profitable airlines in Africa.

Turnover in 1992 rose 24.32 per cent to 4.391 million dirhams (\$457 million), RAM said in its annual report.

Although the company boosted its fleet with the acquisition of four new airliners and increased flying hours by 11.9 per cent, the fuel bill fell 1.9 per cent thanks to an average 14.4 per cent drop in the price of kerosene.

Official urges spending cuts

Iran's riyal drops to new lows

NICOSIA (R) — Iran's riyal, hit by the fall in oil prices, dropped to new lows against the dollar Monday and a presidential adviser said some development projects should be stopped immediately to save foreign currency.

"The situation is alarming but not out of control," Mortaza Alviri, an adviser to President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said in an interview published in Tehran Times newspaper Monday.

The dollar soared to 2,160 riyals in the open market in Tehran and 2,100 riyals abroad, between 80 and 100 riyals higher than Sunday's rates, dealers said.

The central bank quoted the dollar at 1,770/1,772 riyals, raising it by 10 riyals for the fifth consecutive business day.

Mr. Alviri, a former deputy chief of planning, said Iran

should slash expenditures and look for new sources of hard cash.

"Unjustified development projects" such as some planned power stations should be stopped immediately and the government should curb pilgrimage trips to Saudi Arabia and Syria, he said.

Iran has been earning about 85 per cent of its hard cash in recent years from the sale of crude oil, a commodity whose price has fallen by one-third over the past year.

Officials say Iran is already \$8 billion in arrears in its foreign debt, nearly half its budgeted oil revenue of \$16.5 billion for the Iranian year started March 21.

Mr. Alviri said there were several proposals for shoring up the riyal, including one to move to a multi-tier system

setting different exchange rates for expenditures of different priority.

"I'm not in favour of introducing the multi-rate system... as it will again bring financial corruption," he said.

A three-rate system was abolished for most of the economy in March under free-market reforms pushed by Rafsanjani's government to revive Iran's centralised, war-ravaged economy.

Since then, the riyal's bank rate has dropped 13 per cent against the dollar.

Tehran's Jomhuri Eslami newspaper said the dollar's rise had led to a jump in the price of imports and was filtering through to goods produced by Iran's import-dependent industries.

It said central bank actions in the currency market were

confused, making it difficult for producers in both the public and private sectors to decide whether to import machinery and material now or wait for the riyal to lift from its record lows.

Responding to similar criticism, central bank deputy governor Ibrahim Sheibani said the exchange rate was determined by supply and demand and could not be fixed by decree.

"In 1976 we had about \$24 billion in foreign exchange revenue and a money supply of 1.6 trillion riyals. Now the money supply is 40 trillion riyals and revenue about \$14 billion or \$15 billion," he told Kayhan newspaper.

"One could not predict even the fall in international oil prices — which we had assumed at \$16.50 (per barrel) and is now \$13," he said.

The French Cultural Center and Goethe-Institut



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"NOSFERATU"

with live musical accompaniment

by the French pianist

**** Jean - Marie SENIA ****

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Muslim town in Bosnia comes under heavy Serb, Croat attack

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — A Muslim-held town in central Bosnia was under heavy attack by combined Serb and Croat forces, Serbian Radio reported Monday.

The radio also reported clashes between the Muslim-led government army and Bosnian Croat (HVO) forces in Gorzje Vakuf and Jablanica in the south of the former Yugoslav republic.

The radio said the town under attack by Serb and Croat forces was Olovo.

Muslims had gained territory in eastern Bosnia around Teceak, a strategic village controlling the route to the Muslim stronghold of Tuzla, said the radio.

In the besieged Bosnian capital Sarajevo, there were loud explosions during the night, though it was not immediately clear who was responsible.

On Sunday Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic threatened massive retaliation against the Muslims if they persisted in what he called an offensive in the Sarajevo area.

In a letter to international mediators Mr. Karadzic said the Muslim assault would provoke Serb reprisals that would lead to a "complete military defeat for the Muslims", the Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug reported.

Meanwhile, U.N. officials said Monday Serbs are deliberately hampering U.N. aid operations so only a fraction of the food and supplies needed by one million Muslim war victims is trickling through.

Ray Wilkinson, spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told reporters that the tonnage of supplies to eastern Bosnia has steadily increased over the past few weeks but remained "way below requirements."

Although 3,591 tonnes were delivered by road last week, up from 2,800 tonnes the previous week, "we're still stumbling along," he said.

He said the central warehouse in Zenica had "virtually scraps," estimating the supplies would last only a few days.

Mr. Wilkinson said even in Sarajevo, one of the best served aid areas, residents received less than 300 grams (10.5 ounces) of food a day, less than half of what an average adult needs in winter.

All sides — Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslim-led government troops — have been accused during the course of the 20-month-long war of hampering the delivery of aid to rival ethnic groups. But the United Nations has most recently singled out the Serbs for the crassest interference.

Among the most recent targets of Serb harassment was a UNHCR convoy to the eastern Muslim enclave of Gorzje. The 13-truck convoy was rerouted to Tuzla after Bosnian Serbs Saturday refused to let them through to the 60,000 hard-pressed people there.

Most in Gorzje lack adequate food and shelter, and the town has seen only two aid convoys since Nov. 7. Serb forces surrounding the town have recently stepped up shell-

ing — Bosnian Radio said more than 1,000 shells fell there Saturday, killing two people.

Li. Col. Bill Aikman, the spokesman for U.N. peacekeepers, said the convoy turned away from Gorzje after Bosnian Serb troops repeatedly searched the trucks, stealing food and personal possessions.

"The attitude of the local Serbs was unacceptable," he said.

And a Canadian resupply mission to Srebrenica in northeastern Bosnia was fired on Friday, first by mortars then by tanks, said Col. Aikman, adding "only Serbs have tanks in that area."

On Sunday, U.N. aid convoys reached the government-held cities of Tuzla and Srebrenica. And a third line of trucks reached the edge of Sarajevo, ready to unload 78 tonnes of food, possibly Monday. However the Sarajevo convoy left behind a shipment of fuel oil after Serb authorities in Belgrade to cut the amount allowed in.



Rescue workers Monday clear away debris and search for victims in the ruins of an apartment block that collapsed in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (AFP photo)

Signs of life found under collapsed Malaysian building

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — No one has been rescued since an Indonesian woman and her baby and a Japanese woman were brought out of the rubble hours after the building — Kuala Lumpur's first luxury condominium when it was built in 1979 — toppled like a felled tree after being hit by a landslide. The Japanese woman later died.

The French Civil Defence experts with two tracker dogs arrived at around 7 p.m. (1100 GMT) and quickly found the survivor, witnesses said.

Rescuers Monday found the body of a woman and evidence of a children's party in the collapsed Kuala Lumpur apartment.

The find came as the Friends Of the Earth environmentalists blamed indiscriminate tree felling behind the condominium complex for the landslide that brought the building down.

U.K. urges IRA truce before peace agreement

LONDON (R) — Britain Monday urged the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to lay down its arms at once without waiting for London and Dublin to work out a peace agreement on Northern Ireland.

"That doesn't need to wait for a piece of paper. That should happen now," a British official said.

He also said British Prime Minister John Major and Irish leader Albert Reynolds would meet "definitely in London and definitely before Christmas" in search of a peace formula to end one of the world's longest-running guerrilla conflicts.

They are expected to telephone each other later Monday to work out a suitable time, the official said.

The two leaders, eager to maintain the peace momentum and silence the guns after 25 years of conflict and more than 3,000 deaths, met at an EC summit in Brussels last Friday where they both said more work was needed to conclude a peace agreement.

The latest appeal for the IRA to halt its campaign against Britain in Northern Ireland came after the group killed two policemen in the province Sunday.

Republican sources said the shootings were designed to show the IRA was not weary of conflict and could launch a new offensive early next year unless London clinches a peace deal.

"This is to let them know that if the peace process fails there could be an escalation of violence in the new year," one senior source close to the IRA said.

Violence continued unabated on both sides of the sectarian divide. The Ulster Freedom Fighters, an outlawed group fighting to keep Northern Ireland British, said it had killed a man because he was an alleged police informer.

It made its accusation Monday after the man died in hospital. That brings the death toll to seven since Mr. Major and Mr. Reynolds met in Dublin on Dec. 3 to work on a formula for peace.

Rebels boycott Angolan peace talks

LUSAKA (R) — Angola's rebel UNITA movement Monday boycotted peace talks with the government after accusing it of attempting to kill UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in an air raid Saturday.

UNITA spokesman Jorge Valentim told reporters his delegation had boycotted a plenary session of the talks scheduled for Monday morning in protest against the raid on a mass rally Mr. Savimbi was holding in the Angolan city of Cuito.

"The attempt on our president's life constitutes a serious setback to the talks. It is now a matter of life or death," he said.

Negotiators from the government and UNITA had reached a crucial stage in their month-long negotiations to end the world's bloodiest conflict.

"The bomb attack caused many deaths and injuries among civilians and two of Savimbi's bodyguards were seriously wounded," the rebel statement said. "Savimbi escaped unhurt," it added.

The raid occurred at the start of a critical fifth week of peace talks between UNITA (Union of the Total Independence of Angola) and the government in the Zambian capital Lusaka to end nearly two decades of bitter civil war.

The statement from UNITA's Political Commission described the raid as "another conspiracy against his (Savimbi's) life." It added: "This act of pure banditry by the MPLA clearly justifies the fear that UNITA members feel towards political cooperation with (Lusaka)."

Foreign diplomats monitoring the closed-door peace talks in Lusaka have said the two sides have agreed how to implement a ceasefire but were still haggling over how to share power once peace was restored.

Foreign diplomats monitoring the talks said negotiators faced the most critical week that would decide whether Angola achieved peace after nearly two decades of warfare.

"This is the final lap home, a make or break time, for the rival negotiators," a Western diplomat commented.

"The ceasefire and the formation of a new national army they have agreed will work only if the political equation is in place."

The negotiators, meeting under U.N. mediation, clinched the truce 10 days ago and last weekend agreed to establish a new armed forces composed of equal numbers from both sides.

The date of the truce has not been announced because U.N. mediator Aïmeur Blondin Beye wants outstanding political issues resolved as well.

The accord is part of a wide-ranging package needed to end a war that has raged for most of the past 18 years. The U.N. says the conflict is killing at least 1,000 people a day.

On Monday the negotiators were due to tackle political demands from UNITA, chief among them that the rebels be given an equal number of government ministerial posts.

Boys tip handicapped child into river

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (R) — Three young boys pushed their wheelchair-bound, eight-year-old cousin to a river and tipped her in, New Zealand Police said Monday. The boys, two aged five and one aged three, took the girl, who has cerebral palsy, to the river about one kilometre from her home in this New Zealand city Sunday. Police said a passer-by who saw them push the wheelchair into the river dived in and rescued the girl. A social worker who witnessed the incident took the four children to the girl's home and called police. The Social Services' Children's Department would deal with the children, police said.

British postmen complain over santa privatisation

LONDON (R) — Britain's post office has privatised Santa Claus and upset postmen who used to do his work, newspapers reported Monday. The Royal Mail has hired a private firm to answer some 600,000 letters British children send each year to Santa, telling him which presents they hope he will bring them for Christmas. As in previous years, individual thank-you letters are being sent to children. But Postal Union officials have complained the private firm, Metro Mail, is not giving enough personal attention to the letters. They said Metro Mail was paying its staff only seven pence (11 cents) per reply, half what state postmen used to get. Metro Mail's replies to children for their letters — usually addressed to Santa's grotto, Lapland — tell them to make sure they are asleep before Santa and his reindeer arrive in the night.

Shinkansen train sets world's 2nd fastest record

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's new generation Shinkansen bullet train has set the world's second fastest speed of 413 kilometres (256 miles) per hour, railway officials said Sunday. The speed was achieved by the East Japan Railway Co.'s nine-car prototype Star-21 Shinkansen during a test run late Saturday in Nagata Prefecture, northern Japan, they said. France's high-speed TGV train holds the world record of 515.3 kph, established in 1990. Germany's high-speed train, Ice, attained a speed of 406.9 kph in 1988 and is now the third fastest in the world, the officials said. The Star-21, which was completed in March last year, clocked 403 kph Thursday.

Hong Kong seizes tiger parts and smuggler

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong customs found what appeared to be a tiger paw and a piece of tiger bone in the luggage of a traveller crossing from China, a government spokesman said. Some Chinese men believe that consuming tiger parts, particularly tiger bone grates into wine, enhances sexual stamina. The traveller is being held pending investigation. The paw is the third seized this year under laws banning possession or trading in endangered species, the spokesman said.

Villagers overcome handicaps to donate eyes

NEW DELHI (AP) — Residents of a remote Indian village have overcome poor telephone lines, bad roads, and lack of doctors to donate eyes of their dead relatives. In the last five years, the villagers of Aasangaon, 1,085 kilometres (670 miles) south of New Delhi, donated 27 pairs of eyes. The Indian Express newspaper reported Monday. Whenever there is a death in the farming village of 3,500 people in Maharashtra state, a well laid out procedure is followed: The postmaster summons the nearest doctor, who has to drive two hours over rocky roads to reach Aasangaon. He must remove the eyes within six hours of death. They are then sent to an eye hospital in Nagpur, a city 100 kilometres away. The system is not without problems. The only phone in the village is often out of order. Residents then ask the police to send a message on their radio. When that fails, they rely on the power company's internal network. India has 10.5 million blind people, nearly all of them with curable problems, doctors say. Most Indians are reluctant to donate their other organs, believing that the body of a Hindu should not be disfigured before cremation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan ratifies nuclear pact

ALMA-ATA (R) — Parliament in the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan ratified the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a spokesman for the Parliamentary Press Service said. Kazakhstan announced the move shortly after U.S. Vice-President Al Gore arrived on a visit during which he was expected to sign an agreement on dismantling Kazakhstan's nuclear arsenal, which includes 104 SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles. The spokesman said Kazakhstan would join the pact as a non-nuclear state but had no other details. The decision fulfilled a promise by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who earlier said his parliament would ratify the NPT by the end of this year. The NPT aims to prevent the spread of nuclear technology to non-nuclear countries, barring them from owning or developing nuclear weapons and placing civil nuclear sites under international control.

India quake claimed 7,601 lives

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The massive earthquake which rocked western India in September left 7,601 people dead and 15,846 injured, according to a revised official toll released Monday. Agriculture Minister Balam Jakkhar told the lower house of parliament that the Sept. 30 quake, which measured 6.5 degrees on the Richter Scale, flattened 19,000 houses and partially damaged 217,000 other structures. Initial reports had put the death toll as high as 30,000. This was later revised to around 10,000, but exact figures were not released until Monday. Mr. Jakkhar said the government was negotiating for a \$333,000 grant from the World Bank for the rehabilitation of the victims.

Top U.S. official arrives in Vietnam

HANOI (R) — Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Winston Lord arrived in Vietnam Monday to review progress in accounting for American servicemen listed as missing-in-action (MIA) and hold talks with officials. He flew from Phnom Penh, where he said earlier Monday that bringing Khmer Rouge guerrillas into the Cambodian government could hinder future American assistance. In Hanoi Mr. Lord, the most senior State Department official to visit Vietnam, was to attend a military ceremony at Noi Bai Airport to send back MIA remains found during recent searches for analysis at U.S. forensic laboratories. Mr. Lord is also due to observe a meeting Wednesday of U.S.-Lao and U.S.-Vietnamese teams investigating MIA cases on the Vietnam-Laos border. The United States is trying, with Vietnamese help, to determine the fate of 2,248 Vietnam War MIAs in Indochina, 1,648 of them in Vietnam. President Bill Clinton has said "tangible results" on the issue are needed before he will take fresh action to improve relations with Hanoi.

Shuttle returns to earth

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) — Seven astronauts returned to Earth on the Endeavour space shuttle Monday after a mission to fix the Hubble space telescope and revive NASA's sagging fortunes, and NASA officials proclaimed success on both counts. With commander Dick Covey at the controls, the winged ship announced its presence with a double sonic boom, then swooped out of the darkness and glided to a touchdown without lights or power of its own at 12:25 a.m. EST (0525 GMT). NASA said the crew defied the odds to complete a grueling series of five spacewalks to remodel the troubled Hubble telescope during the 11-day, 4.4 million mile (seven million km) journey. "We're back," commander Covey announced after the Shuttle rolled to a stop in the glare of runway lights at the Kennedy Space Centre on Florida's Atlantic coast. "Thank you for the flawless flight," shuttle communicator Ken Cockrell radioed from Mission Control in Houston. "We look forward to using (Hubble), thanks to your work, to see further into our universe than ever before. Welcome home." Story Musgrave, Jeff Hoffman, Tom Akers and Kathy Thornton spent a total of 35 hours and 28 minutes — a world record — installing devices to correct manufacturing flaws on the \$3 billion observatory. Besides rehabilitating the telescope, NASA hoped the 11-day mission would rejuvenate its sagging reputation and demonstrate the astronauts' true ability to build and maintain another huge satellite — a future space station.

20 killed in India bridge collapse

NEW DELHI (AFP) — At least 20 construction workers were killed and many others injured when a bridge they were building collapsed in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, reports said Monday. The partially-built bridge, near a major hydroelectric project, caved in Sunday, killing at least 20 people and injuring others, newspapers said. Forty builders were at the site at the time. State officials said they had recovered 16 bodies from the debris and rescued six workers. Some of the missing people are feared to have been washed away by the waters of the fast-flowing Siul River, they said. Others could be trapped under rubble in the 100-foot (30-metre) deep gorge, officials added.

Fire kills 3 in Austria

VIENNA (R) — Three people were killed and 14 injured when fire broke out early Monday in an apartment building occupied mainly by foreigners in the southern Austrian city of Graz, police told Austrian Radio. Two of the dead were believed to be Turkish men and the third an Austrian woman. Graz police chief Karl Mueller said he thought the blaze had been started accidentally by a vagrant who often took refuge in the building's basement. There was no evidence of arson, but the fire occurred at a sensitive time in Austria, just after a series of letter bombs was sent by suspected right-wing extremists to public figures sympathetic to foreign refugees.

Taiwan might send back all hijackers

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan might send back all Chinese hijackers who allegedly diverted nine mainland planes to the island since April this year, according to a news report Monday. The United Daily News said the government is considering returning all 12 hijackers to China after talks on the issue Saturday between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and its mainland counterpart the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). Beijing and Taipei, annoyed by repeated hijackings of Chinese airliners to Taiwan by mainlanders, are attempting to resolve the issue, which has become a new source of friction between the two. An unnamed Chinese man forced the pilot of a domestic flight carrying 100 passengers and crew to fly to Taiwan Sunday, marking the ninth such case since April and the second in four days. Shi Hwei-You, deputy secretary-general of SEF, said Sunday continued hijackings endangered aviation safety and hurt relations between China and Beijing. But he declined to comment Monday on whether Taiwan will send back all hijackers after the SEF-ARATS talks, scheduled to take place in Taipei from Dec. 18 to Dec. 23.

Sri Lanka army chief to quit

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka's army commander has confirmed that he will resign to take responsibility for the army's worst defeat by Tamil separatist rebels. "I decided to quit my post after taking sole responsibility for the Nov. 11 security forces debacle at Pooneryn," General Cecil Waidyaratne said in comments reported in Monday's Island newspaper. Gen. Waidyaratne would retire by the end of the month and be replaced by the army's chief of staff and northern commander, Major-General Gerry De Silva, the president's office said. Gen. Waidyaratne was originally due to retire in May this year but was given a one-year extension. More than 600 soldiers and sailors were killed or are still missing after a Tamil rebel attack on the Pooneryn Camp on the edge of Jaffna Lagoon in northern Sri Lanka. It was the government's biggest loss in the 10-year-old war against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas, fighting for a homeland in the north and the east for minority Tamils. Gen. Waidyaratne was criticised for this and another disastrous army offensive against the rebels in September and had been under pressure to quit.

Okinawa wants cut in U.S. forces

TOKYO (AFP) — Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota demanded Monday that the United States reduce its military presence in the southern Japanese prefecture. An estimated 400,000 U.S. soldiers and dependents are stationed in Okinawa, which was returned by the United States to Japan in 1972. Mr. Ota told reporters here that the United States first said it needed forces of its own stationed in Okinawa to contain the spread of communism and then said the forces were needed to maintain peace and stability in the Far East. After the end of the cold war, the United States maintained that the U.S. forces in Okinawa were necessary to help settle regional conflicts in the region," Mr. Ota said. The governor said people in his prefecture "feel that this kind of propaganda thing is not real. They (the U.S. forces) do not have any fear that any other country is going to attack Okinawa," he said.

Manila restoring death penalty

MANILA (AFP) — Philippine President Fidel Ramos Monday signed into law a controversial bill restoring the death penalty for "heinous crimes" ranging from murder and kidnapping to large-scale corruption and treason. The law, expected to be challenged before the Supreme Court by opposition congressmen, amends a landmark provision in the liberal 1987 constitution abolishing capital punishment. "In re-examining this provision of our constitution, we do not reject its spirit," Mr. Ramos, a former armed forces chief who called on Congress last year to pass such a law, said after signing the act. "We only say that there are now compelling reasons for restoring capital punishment with respect to crimes which our people and our government consider so heinous or so inhuman that the ultimate penalty must be imposed," he added. Other crimes now punishable by death under specific circumstances include rape, piracy, armed robbery, arson, drug trafficking, and car theft. The law orders the government to carry out executions by electric chair until a gas chamber is constructed.

16 civilians killed in Philippine attacks

COTABATO, Philippines (AFP) — Sixteen civilians were killed and 14 others injured in two separate attacks by Muslim guerrillas and Communist insurgents in the southern Philippines Monday and Sunday, the military said. Muslim guerrillas opened fire on a bus on a highway near Datu Paglas town early Monday, killing nine people and wounding 11 others, they said. The bus company had received extortion letters from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) last month, they added. But it was unclear which of the two groups was responsible for the ambush. The MNLF is currently engaged in a ceasefire and peace talks with the government to negotiate Muslim self-rule in the southern Philippines. Meanwhile, about 60 Communist New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas opened fire on two houses outside Cagayan De Oro City late Sunday, killing seven members of two families, army division chief Brigadier General Clemente Mariano told reporters. After strafing the homes, the guerrillas lined up those who were still alive and shot them. Brig. Mariano said, there were three wounded survivors in the attack, all members of one family. Some local military officers speculated it could have stemmed from the two families' refusal to pay revolutionary taxes to the NPA.

Korda wins richest prize in tennis

MUNICH, Germany (AP) — A good piece of advice from his father was worth \$1.625 million to Petr Korda.

Hanging in there like his father told him, Korda survived his second five-set battle within 24 hours to beat Michael Stich and clinch the richest prize in tennis Sunday.

His 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7-5), 2-6, 11-9 victory completed a 24-hour double over the top-ranked players in the world in the Grand Slam Cup.

On Saturday, Korda battled for 4 1/2 hours and saved five match points to beat No. 1 Pete Sampras in the semifinals.

He needed three hours, 48 hours to beat Stich.

"My father told me to be a good fighter on the court, never to give up and that's what I did," the Czech said.

The best and the most profitable week of Korda's career brought him \$1.625 million as the winner's prize in the richest tournament in the world.

The \$6 million tournament invites 16 players with the best records over the four annual Grand Slam events — the Australian, French and U.S. Opens and Wimbledon.

Korda had not won a title before Munich in 1993, and his best Grand Slam showing was a quarterfinal appearance at the Australian Open.

Korda ended Stich's bid to become the first man to repeat as Grand Slam Cup champion. Stich earned \$2 million for his victory last year, but this year's money for the winner was reduced under a new prize-sharing formula.

Stich, the No. 2 in the world who came into the tournament after becoming the ATP Tour world champion in November and leading Germany to its Davis Cup victory last weekend, could not be saved even by his 30 aces.

He is now 2-7 against Korda, and has never beaten him in Germany.

"He was just hanging in there, he was making the big



Czech Republic's Petr Korda is jubilant after defeating the world No. 1 ranked Pete Sampras in the semifinals of the Grand Slam Cup in Munich (AFP photo)

points and I wasn't breaking, that's why I lost."

Stich said his busy schedule in recent weeks and his five-set match against Stefan Edberg had made him tired.

But it was Korda's fitness that had been suspect. He was cramping at the end of the match against Sampras and had a sore arm.

"I had more right to be tired. He had a tough match yesterday, but that happens in every tournament," Stich said. "I didn't expect anything but a tough match."

Korda said he woke feeling optimistic.

Parma win keeps European soccer alight

PARIS (AFP) — Parma reignited the Italian title race Sunday just as rival European soccer championships prepared to close down for the winter.

Alessandro Melli scored twice as Parma inflicted AC Milan's second blow of the weekend with a 4-0 win at Cagliari. After losing the World Club Championship to Sao Paulo Milan saw top spot in Serie A reclaimed by Parma.

The German and Spanish championships are proving just as tight though Paris St. Germain should go into next weekend's French closedown with a healthy lead.

The 23-year-old Melli hit two second half goals as the new Italian leaders crushed Cagliari. Colombian international Faustino Asprilla hit the first and Zola the fourth.

Parma head the table on a better goal difference, but Milan have a game in hand.

Meanwhile, Paul Gascoigne made a successful comeback for Lazio with the final goal in their 3-1 triumph over Juventus.

Battistini, Vladimir Jugovic, in his own net, and a second half penalty by Dennis Bergkamp put Internazionale level with Juventus on points.

Ulf Kirsten kept Bayer Leverkusen on top of the German League in the final round of matches before the Christmas break.

Kirsten fired home an equaliser from ten yards less than a minute after the visitors had taken the lead through Senegal's Souleymane Sane.

Leverkusen head the league on goal difference from Eintracht Frankfurt, who stopped the rot after three consecutive home defeats with a 1-1 draw away to fourth-placed FC Kaiserslautern.

Stefan Kuntz celebrated his call-up to the national side earlier in the week with a superbly taken volley to put the home side ahead after only two minutes.

Kuntz, 21, has forced his way into Bertie Vogts plans for the World Cup finals next year by topping the scoring charts.

Saturday's stunning strike was his 15th of the season. Eintracht defender Manfred Binz equalised with a superb free kick into the top corner in the 18th minute.

Bayer Munich missed the chance to join the leaders on 25 points after managing only a 1-1 draw with lowly Dynamo Dresden.

Bundesliga champions Werder Bremen lie fifth but there was a distinct European Cup hangover in their performance against bottom-of-the-table Leipzig.

After Uwe Bredow scored in the 26th minute, Dresden were heading for only their third win of the season when Bernd Hobsch — one of the heroes of Bremen's extraordinary comeback for a 5-3 European Champions Cup win against Anderlecht — popped up to equalise six minutes after the break.

Santa Elena Alfredo's scored the only goal of the game for Deportivo La Coruna against Tenerife to keep his side top of the Spanish table.

Deportivo's 1-0 victory kept



Bordeaux's midfielder Zinedine Zidane (left) heads the ball past Cannes defender Philippe Raschke (centre) and his Bordeaux teammate

European Soccer

The England star, sidelined since Sept. 19, was playing for his future in a Lazio squad overloaded with foreigners.

Giuseppe Signori and Allen Boksic gave Lazio a winning lead and Gascoigne scored the third goal in the final minute of the first match he has played from start to finish this season.

Gascoigne said he is determined to make a go of his career at Lazio. Sunday's victory boosted his chances of winning his battle for acceptance in Italy, pushed Lazio into sixth place and thwarted Juventus' chance to go top of Serie A.

Gascoigne has finally showed his true identity," said Lazio President Sergio Cagnotti. "When he, Boksic and Signori are playing like this we can show our potential and do great things."

Inter Milan stopped Sampdoria going out alone at the top with a 3-0 win at San Siro Stadium. Goals from Sergio

at bay Barcelona and helped purge the disappointment of the UEFA Cup loss to Eintracht Frankfurt in midweek.

Barcelona thrashed coachless Valencia 4-0, Valencia, who recently parted company with Dutch coach Guus Hiddink, fell to goals from Hristo Stoichkov, two from Jose Bakero, and a late Ronald Koeman penalty.

Real Madrid's conceded point at home with a goalless draw against Sevilla, allowed Sporting Gijon, who beat Real Sociedad 3-2, to snatch third place.

After 15 matches, the championship is one of the closest in Europe. Only seven points separate leaders Deportivo and Racing Santander, in 10th place. Just six points are between Real Zaragoza, 11th, and bottom club Lerida.

Ajax Amsterdam took advantage of Feyenoord's shock defeat to take control of the Dutch championship.

Ajax beat Willem II Tilburg 3-1, with leading scorer Jan Litmanen getting his 17th league goal of the season, to go two points clear.

Hans Van Arum put Willem ahead in the first half but then scored an own goal that sparked the Ajax recovery.

Feyenoord were beaten 1-0 by Roda JC Kerkrade with 20-year-old Nigerian Tijani Babangida getting the only goal.

Former Aberdeen player Hans Gilhaus boosted Vitesse Arnhem into third place with a hat-trick in their 4-1 win over Groningen. PSV Eindhoven beat Volendam 3-0 to stay fourth.

French League leaders Saint Germain ensured they would complete the year without a single defeat with a 2-0 win over Strasbourg.

Artur Jorge's side extended their lead at the top of the table to six points as closest rivals Bordeaux went down to a 2-1 defeat at Cannes.

PSG, who have not lost at the Parc since Olympique Marseille beat them 1-0 on Dec. 18 last year, took two points from Strasbourg with goals from France stars Paul Le Guen and David Ginola.

Marseille moved level with Bordeaux with a 3-1 win away

at Le Havre with new Brazilian striker Da Silva Anderson scoring twice.

The French League closes down after next Saturday's matches.

Benfica's 1-0 win at Estrela Amadora kept them two points clear of Sporting Lisbon in Portugal. But the leaders are having a stormy time off the pitch.

Several journalists claimed they were beaten up at the Benfica annual meeting Saturday night. The Benfica committee resigned over the club's deep financial problems. The journalist claimed they were then attacked by people at the meeting complaining about the way revelations about the club had been reported.

Anderlecht, four points clear in Belgium, dropped only their fifth point of the season in drawing 1-1 at Cercle Brugge.

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Mayer turns the formbook upside down

VAL D'ISERE, France (R) — Young Austrian Christian Mayer turned the formbook upside down as he waltzed to his first World Cup victory Monday in a men's giant slalom which saw the favourites finish nowhere.

The 21-year-old Mayer, who came through from fourth place after the first run, had never been on a victory podium before and nor had German Tobias Barnersoi, who finished second.

While the little-known skiers rejoiced in their unexpected triumph, favourites of circuit such as Alberto Tomba and Marc Girardelli were left licking their wounds.

Tomba, Olympic champion in the discipline and winner of a Slalom in Canada last week, had a poor first run to place 16th and fared worse in the second to settle for 17th spot over the two legs.

The Italian's lacklustre performance was a stark contrast to his normal death-or-glory style which usually guarantees him a place in the top three unless he falls.

Girardelli, five times overall World Cup winner, suffered an even greater indignity when he finished more than three seconds slower than first-run leader Barnersoi and failed to qualify for the second leg.

Mayer's excellent second run helped him to break the two-and-a-half minute barrier for the two legs as he finished in 2:29.96. Barnersoi was second, 0.20 seconds behind, and Swiss Michael Von Gruenigen third, a further 0.06 seconds down.

There was little joy for the other race favourites. Austrian Guehrer Mader, winner of Sunday's super-G, was handily placed in third after the first

Egypt's Al Ahli favoured to win Cup-Winners' Cup

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Al Ahli are overwhelming favourites to win the African Cup-Winners' Cup a record fifth time next year following the ban on top side Africa Sports Nations.

The Egyptians have been paired with St. George of Ethiopia in the first round, and any result other than a convincing victory for the Cairo club is inconceivable.

While Al Ahli were crushing all before them in this year's Nelson Mandela Cup, culminating in a 2-1 aggregate victory over Ivory Coast's Africa Sports, St. George made an early exit from Africa.

Drawn against modest Tanzanians Malindi in the preliminary round of the Champions' Cup, St. George could

only draw at home and lose the return game.

The ban on Ivorian and Ghanaian clubs following the violent aftermath to a cup tie between their champions last October, rules out Africa Sports, the 1992 winners.

A search for potential threats to Al Ahli unearthed club like Sudan's Al Hilal, Zambia's Power Dynamos or Nkana and Nigeria's BCC Lions.

Al Hilal, Champions' Cup runners-up in 1987 and 1992, play Rwanda's Rayon Sports at home first, an advantage which should ensure a winning lead.

The club representing Zambia should encounter few problems against Swaziland's Eleven Men In Flight, coached

by former Zambian star Jani Simulambwa, or Botswana's Township Rollers.

BCC Lions, winners in 1990 and runners-up one year later, should prove too strong for Burkina Faso's As Fonctionnaires De Bodo-Dioulasso.

Algeria have not fulfilled expectations in the Cup-Winners' Cup for many years, and Na Hussein Dey must be wary of Mali's Djoliba, a side with more experience of African combat.

Zaire's DC Motema Pembe, semifinalists once and quarter-finalists twice in the last three years, stay in Central Africa for a clash with outsiders Angles De Fatima.

Unknown Angolans Atletico Sport Avicac, who caused a

stir by reaching the CAF Cup semifinals, go to Cameroon, where they upset Canon Yaounde this year.

Meanwhile Nakuru Villa and AFC Leopards, two of East Africa's most famous clubs, were cursing their luck after the CAF Cup draw.

Paired in the first round, the giants from Kampala and Nairobi must have hoped for gentler starts to a competition catering for League Championship runners-up.

Villa were runners-up to Nigeria's Shooting Stars in 1992.

Arbachakov retains title

KYOTO, Japan (AFP) — Yuri Arbachakov of Russia beat Cha Nam-Hoon of South Korea on a unanimous points decision to retain his World Boxing Council (WBC) flyweight title here Monday.

Arbachakov overwhelmed the Korean for most of the fight, knocking the WBC's

fourth-ranked challenger to the canvas in the 11th round. "I wanted to win it by a knock out in the final round, but I couldn't and it ended in a points decision," he said.

Cha was in trouble from the third round when Arbachakov's right straight to the face staggered him and drew blood.

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠A 7 6 4 ♣A E J 10 8 4 ♦9 8 5
Partner opens the bidding with a 22-24 point two no trump. What do you respond?

Q.2—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠K J 6 5 ♣A J ♦8 7 6 ♠A 10 6 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
1 NT Pass ?
What do you bid now?

Q.3—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K J 6 ♣K 4 ♦A Q 10 6 5 2 ♠8 4
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
1 ♣ Pass ?
What do you bid now?

Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠A Q J 5 ♣7 3 7 6 2 ♦9 ♠K Q J 6
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
? What do you bid now?

Q.5—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠K 10 8 7 3 ♣A 7 4 ♦6 5 ♠A Q 8
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
? What do you bid now?

Q.6—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠4 2 ♣K 3 ♦K Q 9 8 7 2 ♠K 5
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
2 NT Pass ?
What action do you take?

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T O D A Y	Cinema Tel.: 634144 PHILADELPHIA Harrison Ford — in PATRIOT GAMES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Cinema Tel.: 677420 CONCORD CONCORD '1' Clint Eastwood — in IN THE LINE OF FIRE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' Kim Basinger — in Two Hot To Handle Shows: 3:15, 6, 8:15, 10:15	Cinema Tel.: 699238 PLAZA PLAYING WITH THE VILLAINS Arabic Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 5, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Tel.: 675571 Nabil Al Mashini Theatre presents a play entitled: Al Iim Nuron A popular political comedy Actors: Abeer Issa, Deoud Jalajel, Hassan Al Shaer, Fuad Shomail In addition to other comedians Every night at 8:15 Tickets are sold all day	Nabil & Hisham's Tel.: 625153 ASHAN THEATRE The political comedy WELCOME ARAB SUMMIT Daily 8:30 p.m. The theatre closes Saturday and Sunday English synopsis available
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41 Palestinians return home with security mandate

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

KING HUSSEIN BRIDGE — Forty-one Palestinian veterans of the six-year-old intifada returned to the occupied West Bank on Monday with a different mandate — protecting Palestinian leaders and "national institutions."

The group, the second batch of Palestinian guards trained in Jordan, did not carry any arms. Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said Israel did not permit them to carry weapons or wear uniforms. But they are expected to be allowed to carry light arms once they formally take up their responsibilities as the vanguard of what could turn out to be a rough Palestinian equivalent of the U.S. Secret Service.

Critics of the Israel-PLO accord described the group as the nucleus of a "Palestinian preventive security force."

The youth, most of them in their early 20s, were all believed to be members of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah group.

But none of them would publicly acknowledge their affiliations. "We represent all Palestinians," was the standard answer.

All have served terms in Israeli jails for intifada-related activities and some of them bore visible marks of the treatment they got under Israeli hands, their spokesman said.

The batch of 41 — all of

them from the West Bank — arrived in Amman three months ago and underwent training under the supervision of Jordanian security forces, including the Armed Forces, members of the group said.

They will be assigned to protect key Palestinian leaders, including some of the delegates to peace talks with Israel, and guard Palestinian buildings, including the Orient House in East Jerusalem, the headquarters of the peace negotiating team.

Colonel Ali Bedewi, a military attaché at the Palestine embassy here, said the batch was not part of a proposed 15,000-strong Palestinian police force expected to be deployed in the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho & under the Sept. 13 Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

"This is not the first batch (of Palestinian security guards) to be trained in Jordan, and this will not be the last either," said Col. Bedewi. "Under an agreement reached between His Majesty (King Hussein) and his brother Yasser Arafat, the Jordanian security forces have opened the door (for Palestinians) to be trained as security men."

The group that headed for the West Bank Monday was the second batch of guards. The first batch, of 27 guards, left two months ago after training here.

Col. Bedewi, seeing off the batch of guards across this rickety bridge over the mur-



Some of 41 Palestinian security guards flash V as they are about to cross the King Hussein Bridge on their way home Monday (Photo by Yusef Al 'Allan)

key water of the narrow River Jordan, blamed Israel for the delay in the implementation of the autonomy accord, under which the Jewish state was to start a four-month withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho on Monday.

"It has been our bitter experience over the decades that Israel does not honour its promises," Col. Bedewi told reporters with his back to the Israeli soldiers keeping watch from their bunkers across the river.

Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met in Cairo on Sunday, but they failed to break the deadlock in Israel-PLO negotiations over the size of Jericho area, who will control the exit and entry points of the autonomous territories and security for Jewish settlers in the territories.

Col. Bedewi said part of the proposed Palestinian force was ready to move into Jericho and Gaza as soon as Israel gave the green signal.

But he did not know when that would come.

In the meantime, the new "guards," who once led the intifada and fought Israeli soldiers and Palestinian "collaborators" alike, appeared to relish their new role.

Milling around in the courtyard of the immigration and customs clearance building in South Shuneh, the youths, some of them wearing the distinct black and white checkered Palestinian head-dress, also seemed impatient to get back to their homes.

"We are very happy to go back to our homeland and serve our national cause," said Marwan Al Ghoul, a 25-year-old from the Silwan neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

Asked how the youth felt in their switched roles — from stonethrowers and enforcers of the intifada to guardians of security — Jihad Al Abbasi, an apparent leader of the group, said: "The intifada was a national duty and what we are going to do

in our homeland is also a national duty."

"We are ready to assume our responsibilities when there is an agreement and when the (proposed) Palestinian National Authority (PNA) takes over," added Mr. Abbasi, a native of Ramallah in the West Bank.

Where they active during the intifada before the peace process and the Sept. 13 accord changed their course?

"Yes, every one of us was very active and has gone to prison frequently," Jamal Sharaqa of the Deir Al Ammar area of Ramallah with obvious pride.

Imad Al Dafi, a short and thin youth from the Jalazoun refugee camp in Ramallah, said the group would carry arms if Israel and the PLO made a "political decision" to that effect.

"Once this is sorted out, and the Palestinian authority under Yasser Arafat gives us weapons, we will carry them," he said.

Vatican-Israel diplomatic talks nearly completed

VATICAN CITY (R) — The Vatican said Monday a joint commission set up to establish diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel had almost completed its work.

"(The Vatican) can only confirm the bilateral commission has nearly completed the work foreseen and is now finalising some details," a statement said.

The statement was issued in response to news reports from Israel that an agreement leading to the establishment of full diplomatic relations would most likely be signed on Dec. 30.

The statement did not mention any date for the expected signing but said the Vatican had kept its side of the bargain to keep details of the negotiations secret.

The agreement is also expected to clear the way for a visit by Pope John Paul II to the Jewish state.

Diplomatic sources close to the negotiations said last month the agreement would most likely be signed by the end of the year or early January to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the late Pope Paul VI's Jan. 4-7, 1964 visit to the Holy Land.

Diplomatic ties will be major step in improving relations between Catholic and Jews around the world after 2,000 years of friction.

The joint commission was set up in 1992 and negotiations

moved more rapidly than expected after last September's peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on Palestinian autonomy.

The commission has reached a fundamental agreement on 14 points such as the legal status of the church in Israel or its territories, religious tourism, taxation and a joint stand against anti-Semitism.

Issues such as international guarantees for Jerusalem and the Palestinian question were left to the Middle East peace talks. The Vatican, which supports a Palestinian homeland, has always recognised Israel's right to exist within secure borders.

But it wanted progress on the Palestinian question and guarantees for Jerusalem as a city sacred to the three great monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — before agreeing to full diplomatic recognition.

Sources have said that when the accord is signed the Pope and Israeli President Ezer Weizman will most likely exchange personal representatives before the formal appointment of ambassadors.

This will allow time for sub-committees to work out legal technicalities — such as the church's tax status in Holy Land — and give the Israeli parliament time to ratify the agreement.

Aided faction warns of fresh Somali war

ADDIS ABABA (Agencies) — Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aided's faction said Monday that a plan by his rivals to go ahead and form an interim government without him was a recipe for renewed war.

"It would provoke a fresh round of conflict," General Aided's deputy Abdul Karim Ahmad Ali said in Addis Ababa.

Gen. Aided himself spent Monday in his Addis Ababa hotel room, a day after efforts to get him into face-to-face talks with his bitter rival, Ali Mahdi Mohammed, collapsed.

He was also hoping that a U.S. aircraft which flew him to the Ethiopian capital for international-brokered talks last week would give him a lift back to Mogadishu on Tuesday.

The United States, facing decision for ferrying the man whose militia killed more than two dozen American peacekeepers, says it will not give Gen. Aided the free ride back home.

"Gen. Aided came to Addis Ababa because the American government agreed to provide security and transport. We expect them to live up to their word and take him home," said Mr. Abdul Karim.

One ally of self-styled President Ali Mahdi told Reuters that whether Gen. Aided's Somalia National Alliance (SNA) came on board or not, other factions would form a transitional national council by Jan. 15. "The establishment of TNC cannot be delayed any large because a few groups like the SNA do not agree," said Mowlid Maan Mohamoud, chief of the Bantu-based Somali Africans Mukti Organisation.

An agreement on formation of the TNC was made at U.N.-brokered conference in the Ethiopian capital last March.

Somalis say the U.N. is pushing for the Jan. 15 deadline. Mr. Ali Mahdi flew back to his stronghold in north Mogadishu on Sunday, apparently to prepare to meet the deadline.

The SNA, which says the U.N. is biased, remained firm. "That is impossible... a TNC without the participation of the SNA is unthinkable," said Mr. Abdul Karim.

More U.S. soldiers are to leave Somalia by the end of the week amid fears that civil war will resume after the breakdown of peace talks between rival factions in Addis Ababa.

U.S. military spokesman Colonel Steve Rausch said here Monday the 2nd battalion of the 14th infantry regiment would be the first U.S. combat unit to leave.

Some 650 troops will fly out Friday or Saturday, while the material will leave the country by sea. Loading will begin Tuesday, Mr. Rausch said.

Defence Secretary Les Aspin said in Washington Sunday that 2,500 U.S. troops would be back in the United States in time for Christmas, while the rest would be withdrawn by March 31, as promised by President Bill Clinton.

The U.S. contingent here numbers around 8,000 men on the ground and 9,000 off the Somali coast. All U.S. troops are to leave the country by the end of March.

Hungary seeks new premier

BUDAPEST (Agencies) — Hungarian politicians started searching on Monday for a new prime minister to fill the leadership vacuum created by the death of Jozsef Antall.

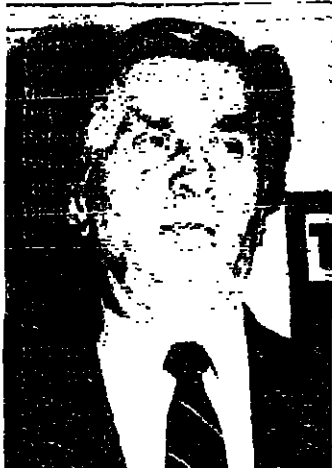
Mr. Antall, 61, died on Sunday of complications from his long battle against cancer, leaving no heir apparent.

The leadership of his Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) party was meeting Monday night to discuss who to propose to President Arpad Goncz as candidate for the premiership.

One party source suggested acting Prime Minister Peter Boross, a loyal Antall lieutenant who headed the government while the premier spent weeks in hospital fighting cancer, was shaping up as the most likely successor.

"I would say that the main value of HDF politics was continuity and predictability," the source answered when asked whether Mr. Boross was likely to remain the party's leader.

Other party officials have also stressed the need to pursue the course Mr. Antall had set toward a fuller democracy. But some have said in the past that HDF founding fathers may veto Mr. Boross,



Jozsef Antall who joined the party only last year and has not carved out a wide power base among the rank and file.

Analysts said the nomination would be heavily influenced by a document naming Mr. Antall's personal preferences, the existence of which was revealed Monday by Sandor Lészak, deputy leader of HDF.

Mr. Antall is to be buried on Saturday, which parliament on Monday proclaimed a day of national mourning.

His testament, which is in the possession of Mr. Antall's family, was due to be revealed to the HDF's executive committee Monday. Its contents have not been revealed, but it contains specific recommendations, Hungarian radio said.

Qadhafi invites hardliners for talks

TRIPOLI (Agencies) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has invited Palestinian leaders opposed to the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accord and heads of the militant Irish Republican Army (IRA) to meet him for talks.

Colonel Qadhafi said at a rally in Al Aziza about 40 kilometres south of Tripoli: "Since they (Western leaders) won't negotiate with them I invite Abu Nidal (head of the Fateh Revolutionary Council) and Ahmad Jibril (head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command) to come to Libya."

"I will meet them in person and in public," he said, in the address broadcast on Libyan television.

Col. Qadhafi also issued a public invitation to IRA leaders to visit Libya for "talks and meetings."

"I am ready to meet the IRA's leaders to advise them not to commit terrorist acts and to publicly support their legitimate and sacred cause," he added.

He said he was willing to meet Mr. Jibril "all other leaders of the Palestinian resistance," whom he described as "noble."

"I don't accept your terrorist acts but I support your struggle," he said.

Col. Qadhafi accused Bri-

tain of having negotiated secretly with the IRA, saying any contacts he has with the militant group would be open and public.

"Ireland has a right to be free and unified," he added. "Why haven't we got the right to meet the leaders of the Palestinian people and those of the people of Ireland," he asked, charging that Western leaders had deceived the Islamic World by meeting British author Salman Rushdie.

Former Iranian spiritual guide Ayatollah Khomeini issued a death sentence against Mr. Rushdie in 1989 following the publication of his book "Satanic Verses," which was condemned by Muslims as blasphemous.

The official Libyan news agency (JANA) said Arab delegations representing parties, organisations and popular groups began arriving in Tripoli to take part in the fourth session of "the democratic, revolutionary Arab dialogue" on Tuesday.

JANA listed names of delegates including many old-time radical leftists and Lebanese militia leaders set to attend the meeting entitled "for a united Arab popular revolutionary movement."

Col. Qadhafi lambasted the United Nations Security Council, which this month toughened sanctions on Libya

after it refused to hand over two suspects wanted for trial in the West over the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

"The Security Council has humiliated the United Nations and destroyed its legitimacy," said Col. Qadhafi who, surrounded by thousands of people waving banners and chanting slogans.

"Down, down with sanctions," shouted some of the crowd, pressed up against Col. Qadhafi's open-topped car. "Down with the Security Council and its supporters," they added.

At least one person was carried away after collapsing in the crush around Col. Qadhafi's car.

In addition to handing over the alleged Lockerbie bombers for trial either in Britain or the United States, Libya is required to cooperate with a French inquiry into the 1989 mid-air bombing of a UTA airliner over Niger.

Because of Libya's refusal to comply, the council adopted a new resolution last month extending the sanctions.

The resolution requires all countries to close their airspace to flights to and from Libya, to prohibit any arms deals with Tripoli and to reduce the size and level of Libyan diplomatic missions.

Reformists give slow but steady shape to democratic Palestinian entity

By Wafa Amr
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A new "centrist" democratic movement is taking strong roots among Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories with the aim of establishing an open, secular, liberalised Palestinian entity in the occupied territories, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said Monday.

The officials said that the movement was beginning to gain momentum, leading to the formation of informal and formal groups calling for a democratic society.

The Palestinian leadership, they said, should make use of this "democratic awareness," and allow it to participate in shouldering the burdens of the difficult task ahead of building a Palestinian entity.

Nabil Amr, an advisor to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, said political considerations which dictated the Palestinian decision-making process prior to the Sept. 13 PLO-Israel accord could no longer prevail. New realities have been created after the accord, which require new terms of reference, he said.

The PLO leadership has come under sharp criticism for the slow transition from a revolution to the building of a state. PLO officials have

gone public in voicing discontent with the way the leadership has been directing the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and in implementing the Sept. 13 accord.

Many prominent PLO officials, including Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas who signed the accord in Washington, have been excluded and distanced from the decision-making process.

Some PLO officials chose to remain passive, while others have decided to push for a democratic, centrist movement that would act as a pressure group on the PLO leadership, reduced to the person of Mr. Arafat.

This group echoes the sentiments of many Palestinians who support the peace process and hope measures would be taken to ensure its success, despite the limitations imposed by the accord.

"The Palestinian-Israeli declaration of principles would place us on the path to independence or on the path to hell, and the outcome depends on Palestinian performance in implementing the accord," Bashir Barghouti, leader of the Palestinian People's Party, said.

Officials said growing concern over the possibility of failing to seize the "historic" opportunity to set up a

Palestinian authority has prompted many Palestinians to act as internal opposition in order to pressure the leadership into democratising.

"A third Palestinian force has emerged and is growing in number," Mr. Amr said. "It is neither submissive to the PLO leadership nor is it the traditional opposition."

Mr. Amr is among those who initiated a reformist movement within the PLO demanding democratisation and a departure from unplanned haphazard ways in directing the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on implementing the PLO-Israel accord.

A memorandum was drafted by the Palestinian People's Party, and a number of independent PLO officials and was later joined by the Palestinian democratic movement (FIDA), criticising the PLO leadership's performance in implementing the accord and lack of negotiating strategy.

Mr. Amr said the reformists, who support the September accord emphasise their loyalty to the PLO and its institutions, had sent the memorandum to Mr. Arafat and the Executive Committee on Sunday after collecting 140 signatures from prominent Palestinians.

He said the memorandum

was attached to a one-page letter addressed to Mr. Arafat asking him to respond positively to the reformists' demands and to officially discuss the memorandum in the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The letter also requested from the leadership initiating a dialogue with the reformists in order to take follow up measures that would ensure democratisation.

"We will persist in our demands until we achieve democratic reforms," Mr. Amr said. "The previous pattern of the Palestinian political reality which was divided between loyalty to the leadership or opposition to it should come to an end."

Other PLO officials and independent Palestinian figures agree that a new Palestinian reality has been created by the peace deal which the Palestinian leadership cannot ignore.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi resigned last week from her official PLO post to set up a human rights commission to monitor the PLO-run self-authority. Dr. Ashrawi publicly backed the PLO's reform movement from the start.

"The PLO leadership is being slowly isolated by its actions, and public doubts

about the leadership's commitment to democratisation as well as Dr. Ashrawi's resignation should be seriously considered and dealt with immediately," a Tunis-based PLO official said.

The democracy movement is not been limited to intellectuals. Officials said it stems from the grassroots, especially inside the occupied territories. It includes all the different sectors of society as well. "They all want to work genuinely in building their state, and the old terms of reference which allows a small group of leaders or their loyal followers the run to show would no longer be acceptable," a PLO official said.

The PLO's mainstream Fatah faction, led by Mr. Arafat, has also been very critical of the leadership's performance in directing peace talks with Israel. Young Fatah leaders inside the occupied territories sent a letter to Mr. Arafat, spelling out Fatah's new political line, adopted by the movement's Revolutionary Council last month. Fatah's new slogan has become democratisation, the sovereignty of law and placing the right person in the right job in the nation-building process.

Mr. Arafat, who has come

under increasing internal pressure to liberalise and to activate the PLO institutions, has succumbed to pressures from some of his Executive Committee members to approve a draft of the Palestinian authority's provisional constitution which emphasises democracy and general freedoms.

Executive Committee member Jamal Sourani and several members of the legal committee in the Palestine National Council (PNC) met in Amman last week with Palestinian legal experts to discuss the draft charter.

Mr. Sourani told the Jordan Times that the committee would submit the draft constitution and the experts' comments to the Executive Committee soon for ratification.

"The importance of the provisional charter is that it guarantees general freedoms, human rights, democracy, and the sovereignty of law," he said.

The PLO official added that the charter was not permanent. It would be functional until July, when general elections are expected to be carried out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The objective of ratifying this charter is to emphasise the democratic nature of the

Palestinian authority which will take over from Israel in the occupied territories," and to specify the authorities of the Palestinian government," he added.

"It guarantees freedoms to individuals, democracy to the whole people, as well as guarantees that institutions and not individuals will run the Palestinian entity," Mr. Sourani said.

That is why the charter has specified that the president's term is five years, renewable for another term only, he said.

"Our only guarantee is democratisation because we are about to build a state and not fighter militias," Mr. Sourani noted. "The military battle requires a leader, and the building battle requires the participation of all the qualified persons and ensuring that non-autocratic means do not prevail."

Dr. Sourani, however, blamed PLO factions for Mr. Arafat's "autocratic" leadership and for allowing him to continue unquestioned in the past.

"We want a state for the liberals and not a detention centre, and it is up to the people to impose reforms and compel the leadership to abide by their rules," Mr. Sourani said.

COLUMN

Artworks stolen from Budapest museum

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Artworks and religious objects worth hundreds of millions of dollars have been stolen from Europe's largest Jewish museum in Budapest, a Hungarian Jewish leader said. "Irreplaceable treasures were taken, including gold and silver works of art from the 1600s, the 1700s and the 1800s, some of which we never had copies of made," said Gusztav Zoltai, the head of the Federation of Jewish Parishes in Hungary. An accurate list of the objects stolen was yet to be put together and could take weeks to compile, he said. The burglary was carried out sometime between Friday night and dawn Sunday, he added. Police said that because of the size of the building a permanent police guard did not notice the burglars, who probably climbed scaffolding around central Europe's largest synagogue to get inside the museum. The national police chief visited the scene and launched an major investigation, Mr. Zoltai said.

British men spending more on looking good

LONDON (R) — British men are splashing out on looking good, buying nearly 50 per cent more toiletries and cosmetic products than five years ago, according to a survey released Monday. Marketing analysts Mintel found more than eight in 10 men now use deodorants. Men aged under 35 are the biggest users. Fifty-six per cent of men thought it was just as important for men to look after their skin as women. But Mintel suggested many must be raiding women's make-up bags to treat their wrinkles. Male consumers spend only \$6 million (\$9 million) a year on skincare products compared with the \$446 million (\$667 million) spent by women. "The guys, it seems, are dipping into their partner's products instead of buying their own," said Mintel.

Hong Kong, Taiwan stars 'blinding China's youth'

BEIJING (AFP) — China's entertainment sector is being invaded by overseas imports, especially the music and film industries, where overseas Chinese stars reign supreme, the influential Guangming Daily said Monday. The intellectuals' newspaper berated the fact that among the 10 most popular singers and actors cited in a poll of middle school students in the eastern city of Nanjing, nine were from Hong Kong and Taiwan. "Stars from Hong Kong and Taiwan enjoy a cult status that is blindly followed by Chinese adolescents," the newspaper said, pointing to the unwillingness of trade magazines to publish articles criticising the popularity of overseas Chinese idols. Hong Kong and Taiwan singers gave 32 concerts in Shanghai alone in 1992, and 28 in the first 10 months of this year, it added. The article follows hot on the heels of official condemnation last month of overseas Chinese pop stars who arranged immensely profitable concert tours in mainland China and then left — without paying any taxes on their earnings. A government circular issued in November banned local sponsors from offering such stars illegal packages under which the sponsors agree to pay the taxes and then use their influence with local officials to have the sums waived.

Buffet problems anger Russian voters

MOSCOW (R) — Russian voters in the Far Eastern city of Chita had to wait for their post-election beer Sunday while buffet staff scrubbed off campaign slogans from bottles, ITAR-TASS news agency reported. The slogans in support of a local candidate for the Federal Council (upper house) of parliament, were found to violate election law which bans campaigning on polling day. Post-election cheap refreshments at the polling station were as an incentive to voters to turn out, but cash-strapped authorities in many places have stopped providing them. In Vladivostok, also in the Far East, TASS reported anger among voters who found high prices at the buffet.